

# St. John's Episcopal Church

## Annual Report



November 2023

## Rector Report – Rev. Laura A. Bryant

Dear Friends in Christ,

Three years ago this week I began my tenure as your rector at St. John's. The first year and a half, we prayed and ministered together under the shadow, anxieties, and restrictions of the pandemic. Slowly and carefully we began to emerge. This year has been marked by a marvelous exuberance, by growth, blossom, celebration, and energetic joy in full fellowship with each other and in working side by side in the many ministries, new and old, we love and share. We have grown and developed in our identity, capacity, and vision as a community of active love offering hospitality and healing for all.

I give great thanks to God for the life we have been given, the good we have been able to do, for visionary leadership, and for the great faithfulness and generosity of so many of you.

Below are some highlights from the past year and from our life together as God's people.

### Life Transitions and Celebrations

#### **Baptisms**

*We receive you into the household of God....*

Cathy Osborne

Craig Osborne

#### **Confirmations**

*Strengthened, O Lord, for your service....*

Jennie Kate Carr

Daniel Cutshall

Chris Honeycutt

Finnigan Lilavivat

Cathy Osborne

Craig Osborne

Elizabeth Stillwell

Jeremy White

#### **Marriages**

*Dearly Beloved*

Michael Leslie Winfield and Rita Elizabeth Treanor Plemmons

Charles Bradley Kinser and Aniela Kasprzak Suit

## **Deaths and Burials**

*For those we love but see no longer.....*

Charles Pittman Cole

Evelyn E. Gatley Huyck

James Don Swartz

Carl Walter Sweat

Bert Coates Bach

## **Organ Installation and Dedication**

Among the many highlights and accomplishments of this year, the installation and dedication of the new organ, and completion of the organ capital campaign stands out. We have acquired a beautiful new instrument and we have done so without going into any debt. The purchase of the organ was an ambitious undertaking, but will support and enhance our worship and prayer, and feed our spirits for many years to come. I thank the members of the organ committees who first conceived of the project, those who oversaw the capital campaign and construction and installation, and the many members of the congregations whose enthusiasm and generous financial support made this possible.

## **New Ministries Born**

This year we saw the birth and growth of new ministries and fellowship opportunities in all areas of our life together.

This summer, in partnership with Episcopal Migration Ministries, St. John's sponsored and welcomed the Sakhi family, refugees from Afghanistan, and have been supporting them in their resettlement in Johnson City. The situation was critical, and the need was urgent, and with little time to prepare, a committee of 16 people, and many others, stepped up to provide for the family and support them in establishing a new home here. Needs included financial support, housing, furniture and household goods, medical care, job opportunities, cultural orientation, and the navigation of legal and government procedures. The leadership exercised by the committee and the generosity of so many has been a testimony to hospitality and love in action. We marked the one-year anniversary of our streetside food pantry and the support and donations of food that keep it stocked week by week. Though still a small percentage of our total budget, we more than doubled the budget for our outreach ministries.

The Pastoral Care Committee launched the Flower Ministry, which has been a beautiful and powerful expression of the ties of love, compassion, and care that bind us together.

The altar flowers are divided into several smaller bouquets and arrangements and delivered to parishioners and families experiencing loss, illness, or other hardships, or those celebrating life events. The members of the Flower Ministry deliver 3-6 arrangements each week to parishioners and others far and wide. Reaching out and going out in this simple, faithful, and powerful way, is another example of love in action, and has touched hearts and brought encouragement to many people.

Other new ministries launched or reborn this year include the Earth Guild, the Open Book Book Group, the Seamless Circle, and the Library Guild. The Young Adult group is thriving. Greeters now serve at both Sunday morning services to welcome everyone who comes in our doors and has proved to be a wonderful way to meet newcomers and old timers too. The acolytes traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the National Acolyte Festival for the first time in many years. In addition, St. John's went on pilgrimage and traveled to visit a series of icons in North Carolina.

In worship, we added a Blue Christmas service during Advent, and held a healing service each Wednesday in Lent. We now offer the sacrament of healing once a month at both Sunday services. Several new people have joined our liturgical ministries teams.

New leaders have stepped up to start and support this growth and blossom and other leaders continue to serve faithfully. I am so grateful for the heart, spirit, and energy that the parishioners of St. John's bring to the ministries they lead and serve.

And on the theme of new...we continue to be blessed by our many newcomers, and the opportunity to introduce people to the Episcopal Church and to St. John's. I give thanks for those who have hosted and provided hospitality at our newcomer lunches.

### **The Work of the Vestry**

The most important work of the vestry, in addition to other responsibilities they carry and decisions they make, is discernment of God's call for the people and parish of St. John's. Where do you notice the movement of the Spirit? What is God up to and how and where is God leading us? The Spirit is alive and lively in our midst and we are always being called to new directions, new possibilities, and new life. The vestry continues to be inspired by the four emphases that characterize St. John's: Relationships, Prayer and Spiritual Nurture, Hospitality, and Sharing our Gifts and Service.

In January, the vestry went on retreat at Lake Logan Conference and Retreat Center in North Carolina. The purpose of the retreat was to set goals for 2023, build a foundation of fellowship for good communication and creative collaboration throughout the year, and engage in a process of strategic visioning and experimentation. Canon Michelle Bolt joined us for the Friday night and Saturday morning session.

The vestry identified two core values as foundational for the faithful vitality of the parish and our ministries:

- We will continue to practice sound stewardship of all our financial, physical, and spiritual resources.
- We will continue to deepen and expand our practices of hospitality and dedicate ourselves to building an inclusive community of welcome to all.

In addition, the vestry identified three areas of concentration for 2023:

1. Growth in outreach to our neighbors and community and the development of new ministries of compassion and care.
2. Develop ministries to support all ages and stages of life.
3. Provide for greater variety in our liturgical worship, music and other devotional offerings.

Three questions emerged in discussion of these areas of concentration:

1. How can we create ministries that nurture meaningful relationships to those within the parish and outside of it? How can we get to know and better serve our neighbors?
2. In what way or ways can we nurture our children?
3. What does "alternative worship" mean and how can we implement it?

The vestry then went out to talk to parishioners about these questions and their needs and hopes for themselves and for this parish.

From these conversations around these three questions, the vestry identified these goals and initiatives:

- *Expanded opportunities for children and youth to be involved in the liturgies and worship of the church.*
- *Opportunities for strengthening the bonds between us and nurturing friendships with one another.*
- *Activities and opportunities to engage in conversation and build relationships with those we serve and those who frequent our outreach ministries.*
- *Once a quarter to offer alternative worship services with different musical styles and instrumentation.*

### Christmas 2022: The Great Freeze

And who can forget Christmas 2022? We were undaunted by the Great Freeze!

Christmas week a bitter and historic cold snap descended upon Johnson City. On Christmas Eve a pipe burst and we lost electricity, water and heat in our church building. We had to cancel the 4 pm service. But many hearty souls, dressed in parkas, hats and mittens, attended the 11pm Christmas Eve service and the and the 10 am service on Christmas Day. It was so cold in the chapel that the oil in the candles froze, but the people of St. John's rose to the occasion and came to pray and worship and celebrate anyway. Jon Lau, Nick Andrews, and Bill Archer and others labored generously over the holiday to restore power and heat to the building.

### **Diocesan Convention**

On February 3 & 4, St. John's hosted the Bishop, Diocesan office staff, and delegates from every parish in the diocese for Diocesan Convention. The two day event required a great deal of preparation but was a joyful opportunity to offer hospitality to the whole diocese.

### **Rally Day and Ministry Fair**

Rally Day was another highlight of the year. Journalist and memoirist John Blake was our guest speaker; he inspired and fed us with his personal story of reconciliation, dismantling racism, and healing. The ministry fair, under the organizational leadership of Jackie Mabrey, was a lively event and great success. The ministry fair displays, hosted by ministry leaders, crowded the narthex, chapel and hallways, inviting people to learn about and participate in the fellowship and ministries of the parish.

### **Behind the Scenes: Great Faithfulness**

New ministries, new growth and blossom....but underneath is the steady drumbeat of great faithfulness and behind the scenes are the people who quietly keep church going day after day, week after week, year after year, generation after generation.

Just to get ready for a Sunday takes a whole host of people—choir rehearsals, the altar set, vessels and linens cleaned, flowers arranged, lessons prepared for Sunday School and Adult Faith Forum, front porch swept, newsletters articles written, coffee hour goodies made, bathrooms and nursery cleaned, streetside food pantry replenished with supplies, bills paid, prayers prayed, transportation arranged, microphones, sound system, and livestream ready, liturgical ministers greeters and ushers and coffee hour hosts at hand and ready to serve.

Thank you. Thank you for offering yourself; your gifts, your energies, your wisdom, your compassion, and your prayers, as God continues to nurture us to grow as a community of love offering hospitality and healing to all.

## Sr. Warden's Report – Tom McGinnis

St. John's vestry has had an active and productive year. In January we welcomed the newly elected members of the vestry, Lee Phillips, Kathi Horne and Allen Pickel. After a previous year dictated by Covid protections, we were delighted to be able to have an in-person vestry retreat at Lake Logan Retreat Center in North Carolina, led by Canon Michelle Bolt and Reverend Laura. A study guide was the book "How to Try," which we continued to use throughout the year. The vestry, as a result of our studies, developed three areas to expand and investigate: serving our neighbors, nurturing our children and alternative worship.

In January, we approved the installation of an AED, and a training session was held in order to make sure as many parishioners as possible knew how it operated in case of a medical emergency.

A highlight of the year for the vestry and the parish was the hosting of the annual diocesan convention held in February. This required considerable preparation and scheduling, which was accomplished with the help of numerous volunteers. The bishop and his staff were very complimentary of the results.

An on-going project for the year was the installation of the new organ and the continued campaign to raise funds for this project. A deficit of approximately \$140,00 was projected. The organ installation began in June and was completed in September.

The vestry, at our annual retreat in January, developed a program of discernment centered around *How To Try*, a book on design thinking and church innovation. Over the next few months, we, with subgroups, developed three experiments which will be implemented early in 2024. These are answers, we hope, to the following questions: How do we get to know and serve our neighbors? In what way or ways can we nurture our children? What does "alternative worship" mean, and how can we implement it? Look for more information in the months to come.

The vestry initiated a program of greeting each person as he or she entered the church for services on Sunday, regardless of whether they were newcomers or longtime members of the parish. Various vestry members served as greeters, as well as some non-vestry parishioners.

Primarily because of up-to-date pledge payments and two significant bequests, it was possible and feasible to transfer \$300,000 to the Endowment Fund. Proceeds from investments from the Endowment Fund can be used for various purposes non necessarily budgeted.

An exciting project was the development of the process by which a family from Afghanistan was relocated from the Middle East to east Tennessee. The Refugee Committee was formed and did a fantastic job in welcoming this family.

As we complete our 2023 year, the needs of the parish which the vestry will examine are the need for additional staff to support the growth in ministries, newcomers, and other needs. We want to expand our outreach our outreach ministries and budget. We are hopeful of a successful stewardship campaign and increasing our financial income.

The vestry continues to be concerned, along with other items, with outreach, further development of the youth program and financial stability.

Our annual retreat is scheduled for January 2024.

## **Junior Warden's Report – Bill Archer**

The past twelve months have been eventful and exciting for our parish in many ways. Here are some of the highlights relating to the maintenance, upkeep and improvement of our buildings and grounds.

We installed much needed new signs at our main entrance, on Roan St., and our parking lot. The hallway wall downstairs was repaired and repainted.

Squirrels invaded the space above our ceiling and scampered through other parts of the building as well. They were trapped and relocated and the holes they entered through were sealed. Their nests in the insulation above our ceiling tiles were removed.

And of course, who could forget the extremely low temperatures and our frozen pipes and loss of power on Christmas Eve? There was extensive damage to our HVAC systems and sprinkler system. We are still dealing with some complication issues related to that event.

The components of the recently moved sound system have been housed in a side bench in the Nave so the area is more attractive.

In anticipation of the Convention, dozens of ceiling tiles throughout the church were replaced, light bulbs were replaced, and all the exterior red doors were repainted.

An AED was installed, and many parishioners received CPR/AED training.

We have had several roof repairs performed over the past year.

When the old organ was removed in June 2022 and stored in the undercroft, it was to be removed with a year and that was done.

New headsets and transmitters like the ones used here at Convention were purchased for the clergy in our continuing effort to improve audio in the Nave.

After a tremendous amount of preparation, planning and work performed over many months, installation of our new pipe organ began in June!

After much negotiation with the City codes department, it was finally determined that we would not be required to install sprinklers inside the organ case, instead using smoke and fire detectors at a much-reduced cost.

Trimming and mulching around the church continue to be performed on a regular basis.



The oldest part of our physical plant was built in 1905, and we must always continue to be aware and vigilant in caring and in planning for care of our great facility.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Junior Warden for the past 3 years. It has been a pleasure to be involved in the care and preservation of our historic facility.

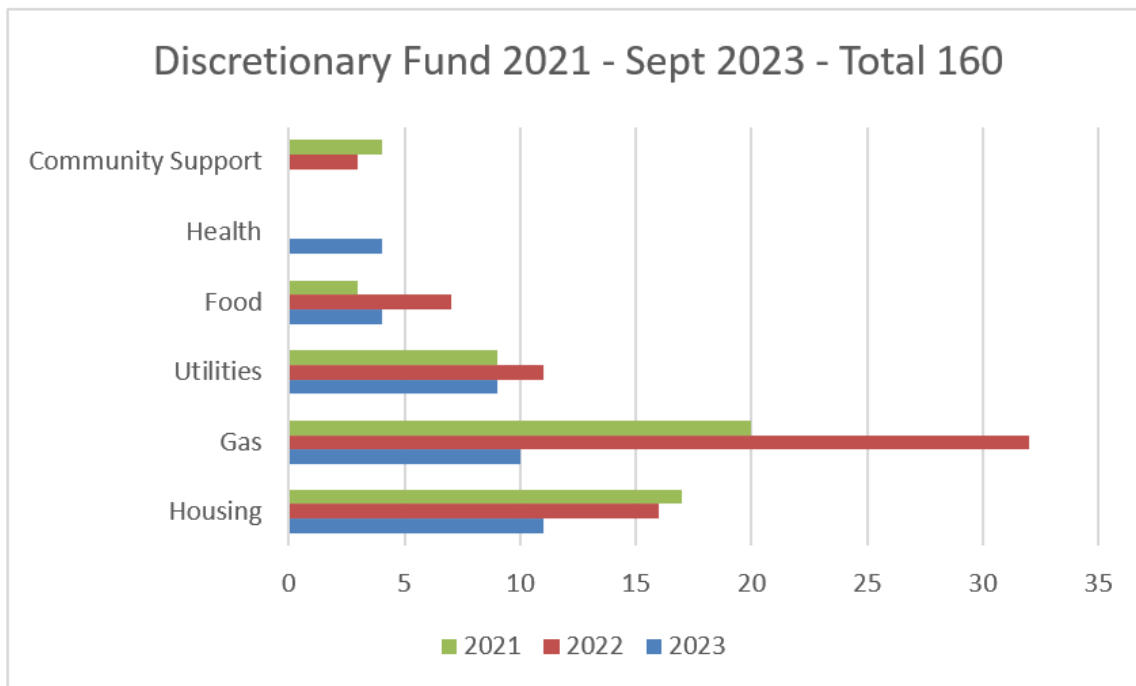
## Deacon’s Report – Rev. Cathy Johnston, Deacon

### Discretionary Fund Distribution

Due to your generosity to the St. John’s discretionary fund, we can assist individuals and families in our community that are struggling to have, or maintain, the basics of daily living. Through the fund we can provide emergency assistance such as:

- Housing – Rent or short-term accommodations
- Food vouchers
- Gas vouchers
- Utilities – electric, gas, water
- Health/Hygiene
- Community support – One Acre Café, Family Promise, ARCH (Appalachian Regional Coalition on Homelessness), The River and Downtown Day Center

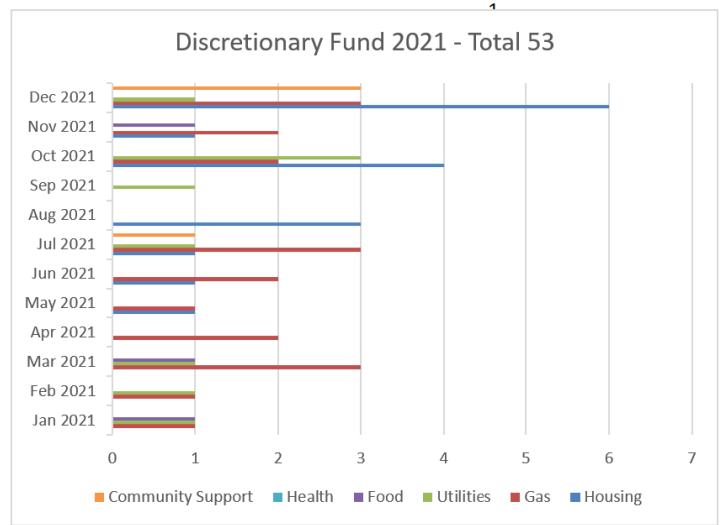
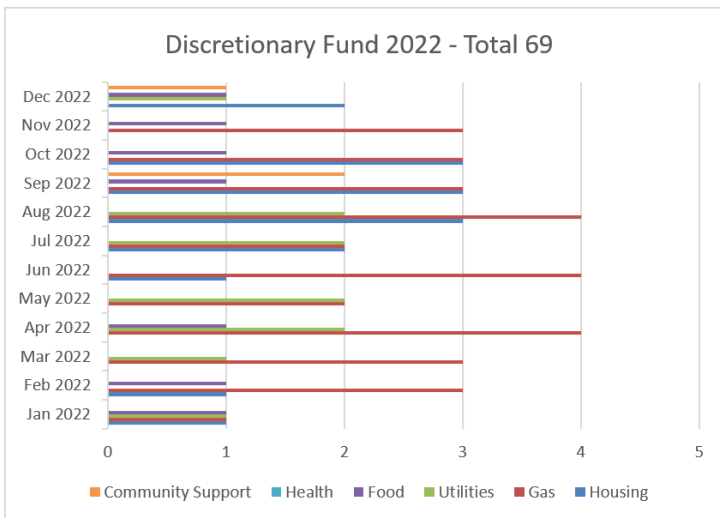
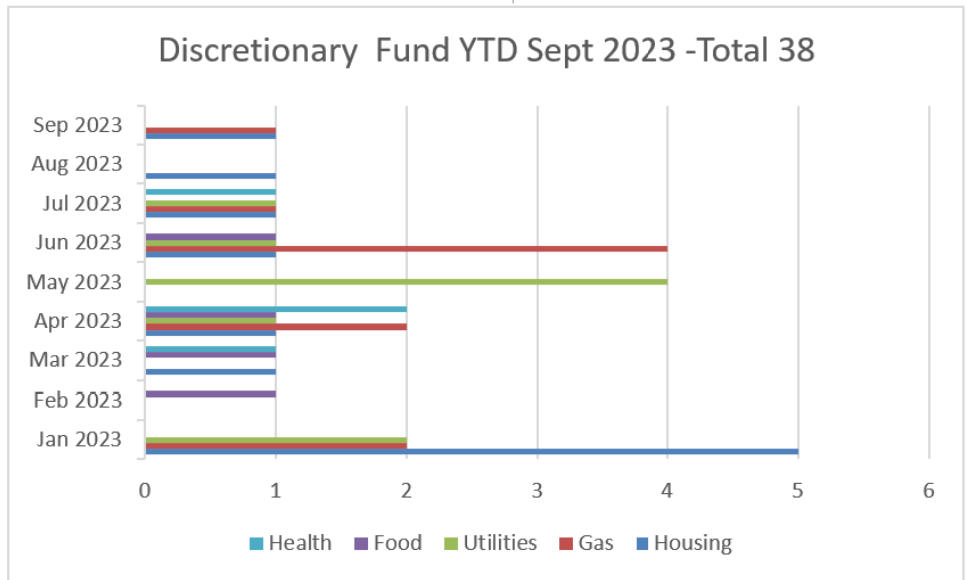
Our assistance numbers for the past three years with 2023 being YTD as of September.



The two most common ways to contribute are:

- Place cash or lose change in the offering plate on the first Sunday of the month.
- Direct contribution to the church with notation for discretionary fund.

Thank you for your contributions to the Discretionary Fund.



## Youth and Young Adult Report – Ryan Clinton, Youth and Young Adult Intern

**Fellowship** - Over the past year, the St. John's Youth Group has been blessed to be able participate in numerous fellowship opportunities, both together as a group as well as in partnership with other churches. These opportunities have been especially important within the group, giving the youth a chance to gather together outside of the church walls. As a group, in the past year alone we've gone bowling, laser tagging, participated in an escape room, and volunteered at local non-profits. We've sent youth to diocesan wide retreats, such as Finn Lilavivat attending East Tennessee's Happening last spring, worked to grow relationships with churches in the Tri-Cities, such as reviving the TricEY (Tri-Cities Episcopal Youth) cohort, and partnered with churches across the country, including participating in a joint mission trip to Wheeling, West Virginia last June.

More recently, the youth had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. to attend the National Acolyte Festival at the Washington National Cathedral. Along with dozens of other churches from across the country, we were able to join the service procession, as well as explore and learn about the rest of the Cathedral. We also had the opportunity to explore the rest of the Capital, visiting the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, as well as the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument. It was an incredibly soul-stirring trip, as well as a wonderful time for the youth to connect with one another, building and fostering relationships that last outside Sunday School.

**Learning** - The Youth Sunday School curriculum operates on a semi-monthly cycle between two types of material, with an occasional exception for certain Sundays. On month A, we follow TeenText High School, a monthly curriculum published by the Educational Center ([educationalcenter.org](http://educationalcenter.org)). The curriculum focuses on the lectionary readings for each Sunday, following the Revised Common Lectionary, the same lectionary readings for Sunday service. After reading the text together as a group, the youth are given a couple of discussion questions to deepen their understanding of the text, as well as their faith.

During month B, we focus on diving into one of many different specialized topics. In the past, these have ranged from discussing the history of Saints, and culminating in having each youth member pick their own patron saint, to watching a movie each Sunday and discussing its impact and religious relevance (most recently, *Jesus Christ Superstar*), to celebrating special feast days, like making Candles for Candlemas. Finally, on special occasions, we spend the Sunday talking about a timely topic in relation to the calendar of events that are happening or have happened in the past week. Most recently, we spend a Sunday discussing the life of St. Francis, as well as why specifically he is considered the Patron Saint of Animals.

**Future** - In the next coming year, we have several different events, activities, and educational our tradition of partnering with St. Paul's Kingsport and Holy Family in Indiana for our Mission Trip. We also plan on having volunteering and service opportunities in November and January, in addition to our regular events. Finally, in the spring the Youth will have the opportunity to talk to members of differing Holy Orders within our church, allowing them to really see and hear what

our leadership does. All of this and much more to come, so please continue to keep us in your prayers.

## **Organist/Choirmaster's Report – Nicholas Andrews**

Organ Report: The installation of our new pipe organ began in June of this past year and was complete in early September after a three-year process. The organ was constructed and installed by Patrick J. Murphy and Associates of Stowe, PA. We are grateful for our successful capital campaign and for everyone who has contributed to this project over the past several years. A special thank you to all those who have served over the past three years on the organ committee(s). An organ dedication is scheduled for Friday, November 17, at 7:00 p.m. played by Mr. Tate Addis of Asheville, NC.

Music Report: The music department continues to thrive in our rebound from the pandemic. At the start of the season, we welcomed four new paid singers to the choir. This fall, our choir led Choral Evensong on October 1 to commemorate the feast of St. Michael and All Angels. We are preparing for our annual Lessons and Carols service on December 17 at 5:00 p.m. The choir meets weekly on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in the choir room.

The handbell choir meets weekly on Sundays following the 10:30 a.m. service. The group plays once a month on Sunday morning and for other special holy days.

## **Children's Christian Education Report – Rae Grosserode**

Although our numbers are small, the children's ministry continues to thrive and grow. Last year there were six students enrolled in elementary Sunday School, five of whom participated regularly. This year we have 10 students enrolled, and we usually have at least six in class on Sunday. We are still using the Virginia Theological Seminary's Episcopal Children's Curriculum, which offers a good balance of Biblical stories, lessons about the liturgical year, and teaching of Episcopalian traditions and practices. Each year of the three-year curriculum cycle includes a unit with specific Church focus: Baptism, Holy Eucharist, or Worship. This year we will work through the unit on worship. Currently we are wrapping up a unit about prophets in the Old Testament before turning to a study of the season of Advent. The children are engaged in the lessons and art responses. They ask thoughtful questions and often have insightful comments during discussion. They are more shy about singing, but this is to be expected, as we practice hymns, not children's songs. I encourage them to think of our class as a family unity within the larger church family, and they continue to be friendly and cooperative with each other. This is my ninth year as the Children's Education Director, and it's still the best job there it!

## Nursery Report – Lexie Johnson

I work in the nursery along with Emma. On Sunday mornings, we usually have up to five kids on average, sometimes more. We have all kinds of fun activities, and we make it a morning full of learning about Jesus with other fun activities for our young children.

We play music and nursery rhymes in our class. We read a story from the Bible each morning along with a hands-on craft and a lot of painting. Our kids love reading and dancing. We also have snack time – one of their favorite parts of the day. Come join us!

## Parish Administrator’s Report – Jonathan Lau

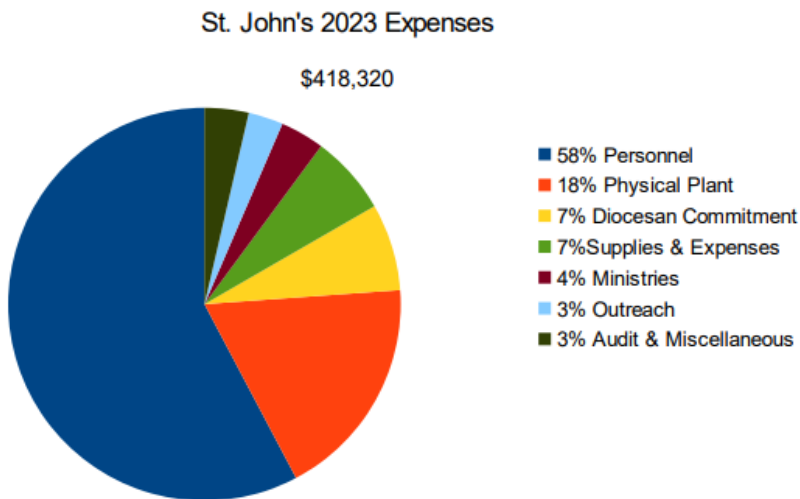
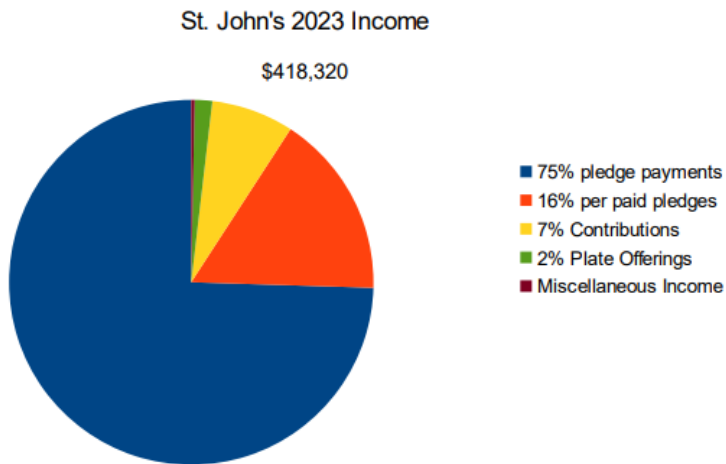
Our 2022 external audit was completed mid-June and sent to our diocese prior to the June 30 canonical due date. Our auditors, Blackburn, Childers & Stegall, reported that there were no findings, and it was a clean audit.

Our 2024 stewardship campaign is focused on building a community of love rooted in God’s gifts of abundance and life. Goals announced are to increase income by 10%, increase outreach budget by \$10,000, and increase pledging units by 10%. The Parish Administrator’s role is to compile weekly reports keeping our parish and vestry aware of how we are progressing.

A new Safe Church manual, Diocesan Policies for the **Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**, was approved by Bishop and Council and published for the Diocese of East Tennessee in July 2023. The new policy contains procedures on inclusion, medication tracking, guidelines for travel, and much more. Annually our vestry resolves to follow all guidelines set forth. The manual is read and acknowledged annually by all clergy, vestry, staff and persons taking “Safeguarding” training.

## Treasurer's Report – Reneau Dubberley

The Income and Expense through September has continued to be positive with respect to budget. The unbudgeted expenses to be paid as: Cooling tower (\$105,000), Organ (\$20,000) and Diocesan Commitment (\$16,800).



## Finance Committee Report – Bob Cooper

The majority of the finance committee’s time is spent monitoring our monthly financial reports and reviewing funding requests and making appropriate recommendations to the vestry.

Our committee also monitors and manages St. John’s funds to ensure we are receiving the best possible returns. One example is recently the vestry approved our recommendation to move \$300k to the St. John’s Endowment so that the resultant income will help support future special projects for years to come.

Also this year, through the efforts of Ted Jackson, we have applied for an energy grant from the Department of Energy. If successful, we will be able to improve the energy efficiency of our windows and strategically add insulation to reduce the cost to operate our facilities.

Your committee members are David Kalwinsky, Ted Jackson, Jon Lau, Reneau Dubberley, Bill Archer, Suzanne Donaldson and Bob Cooper, with ex officio Tom McGinnis and Laura Bryant. St. John’s sound financial condition is in large part due to the wise, considered deliberation of this group.

## Endowment Committee Report – Suzanne Donaldson

St. John’s Episcopal Church Endowment Fund is governed by The Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (UPMIFA) which gives clear direction on the investment and spending policies of the fund. The Fund is included in the annual audit of all of St. John’s finances. In the 2023 year, the amount allocated for spending was \$4,318.31.

The balances representing contributions to the Endowment Fund for the year from August 2022 thru August 2023 are:

	Permanent Fund	Quasi-Endowment Fund
8/31/2022	\$62,696.97	\$35,767.73
Additions	\$20,000.00	\$26,022.33
8/31/2023	\$82,696.97	\$61,790.06

The funds designated as “Quasi-Endowment” represent actions by the vestry to move portions of bequests received to the Endowment Fund.

The total value of the Endowment Fund as of 8/31/2023 is \$212,367.73. This balance includes accumulated earnings from the beginning. We are pleased to report that the vestry has designated \$300,000 from bequests received in the past three years to the Quasi-Endowment Fund. This will bring our Endowment Fund to over \$500,000. The annual spending is based on the fund balance

averaged over the last 3 years, so we can look forward to the spending allocation growing to \$20,000 in the future.

The 2023 members of the Endowment Committee are Suzanne Donaldson, Bill Fryar and Emily Bidgood, as well as ex-officio members Dr. Tom McGinnis and Rev. Laura Bryant.

## **Worship Committee Report – Kathi Horne, Vestry Liaison**

Altar Guild – As of late summer, St. John’s altar guild has recruited several new members and former members for commitments to service and worship. In the October meeting, leaders JoAnne Paty, Brandon Guffey, Rev. Laura Bryant, and Deacon Cathy Johnston presented a church events calendar that runs from October 2023 through January 2024. The calendar helps to guide active altar guild members through the upcoming fall services and events, providing them notice of upcoming services that fall outside of the regular Sunday morning set-up. St. John’s has also brought back the pre-Covid healing stations for both the 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. services to be done on the last Sunday of every month. The reintroduction of the healing stations has furnished definitions for both the OI (Oleum Infirmorum) and OC (Oil of Chrism) on which services each are used.

The altar guild now has a written guide for functions of members during the Maundy Thursday service. Rather than having members going back and forth at the end of the service for the stripping of the altar, we now have an individual who acts as “shepherd” and guides paired members to retrieve specifics at intervals, which works as a more streamlined process. We plan to have individual altar guild members specifically scheduled for this service, rather than taking a “anyone who can help needs to be there” type of approach. This approach will also be of great assistance during our larger services for Christmas, All Saints, Advent and Easter.

Acolytes – We currently have nine youth members ranging in ages 9-10 who have served as acolytes this past year. Additionally, five adults have helped acolyte for the 10:30 a.m. service in the past year by assisting with streamers during holy day services. Acolyte liaison Emily Bidgood has held three training sessions this year for acolytes as well. We were able to purchase four albs that will accommodate growing acolytes. This October, four of your youth and five adult chaperones traveled to Washington, D.C. to represent St. John’s in the National Acolyte Festival at the Washington D.C. National Cathedral. We are always in need of more acolytes and welcome the opportunity to have more young people volunteer.

Ushers – The ushers have equally added several members for service, and senior members put together a list of Usher Instructions made available for ready reference at the back of the nave. This includes instructions on greeting and seating, church count for communion, carrying up the elements, distribution of collection plates and guiding member of the congregation for communion. St. John’s still practices pre-Covid procedures for communion, which the ushers refer to as the “sip or dip” process. The left side of the altar is for individuals who prefer to have



drops of wine placed on the wafer before consuming it, and the right side is for individuals who prefer to drink from the chalice. We are still not encouraging intinction of the wafer into the wine for sanitary reasons.

## **Children and Youth – Rucht Lilavivat, Vestry Liaison**

The Youth and Children of St. John's has enjoyed a great deal of revitalization. That's precisely the word I would use - revitalization. The youngest members of our church have grown in number thanks to our active parents and the shepherding of Rae Grosserode, who has led a dynamic and beloved Sunday School. Our Youth Group is small in number but mighty. It flourishes under the leadership of Ryan Clinton, our Youth Director.

One of the reasons for our success is the Ministry Committee we have constructed through careful discernment. Our Youth Ministry Team collectively read a text - *Sustainable Youth Ministry*. One of the precepts of the book is to establish a network of three adults that lead the church's youth. That way, no one person is overwhelmed with the job, and others can step up to take on responsibility if a leader needs to step back.

It is of note that our Youth Group only has about two to four members, but it is of even more note that according to reports - this is the size of most Episcopal Youth Groups in Tennessee.

I am happy to report that this past year's mission trip to Wheeling, West Virginia was a resounding success. The youth of four different churches congregated together to aid up to five different organizations. The mission trip has now become a tradition and we can look forwards to more in the years to come.

Finally, I am happy to also report that our church has reignited our tradition of going to the National Acolyte Festival in Washington, D.C. this year. Once upon a time, our acolytes took this trip annually, but now after many years, our young people are returning to this wonderful event. The National Acolyte Festival is held at our National Cathedral and features representatives from around the world. We were the only Episcopal church represented from Tennessee.

## **Adult Faith Formation – Lee Phillips, Vestry Liaison**

Adult Faith Forum (Sunday mornings, 9:15-10:15) - There has been robust attendance for these sessions, which have included conversations about the foundations of our faith, theological language, scripture, and spiritual practices. We have also done book studies, *Just Mercy* and *The Book of Forgiving*.

Lent Series - Healing service on Wednesday evening, followed by discussion of "Practicing Compassion," based on the Living Compass books.

The Open Book Group - We started a book discussion group that meets once a week for five or six weeks at a time.

Centering Prayer - The Centering Prayer Group, facilitated by Frances Jackson, continues to meet on Zoom on Tuesdays from 5:45 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. We are also currently meeting in person in the Prayer Room using a hybrid format to include everyone.

Inquirers' Class - There were 10 people confirmed in the spring of 2023.

Labyrinth - Classes on the labyrinth were available during the Sunday School hour during the month of July. In September, we hosted a group of students from University School who walked the labyrinth. The teacher plans to bring another class next semester.

EfM - EfM, which has met on Zoom since 2020, began meeting in hybrid format (in-person and on Zoom) in August.

We requested and purchased two new pieces of technology: a wireless microphone, which is used in Adult Faith Forum, and a Meeting OWL, which allows us to meet both in-person and by Zoom. The Meeting OWL is also used for vestry and other groups.

## **Outreach Committee Report – Allen Pickel, Vestry Liaison**

On November 5<sup>th</sup>, All Saints Sunday, The Sahkis will be tentatively visiting. There is also a pancake breakfast between the services. The car deal for the Sahkis fell through, however, they did get a temporary loaner for a few months. The search for a permanent car continues. The committee is also working with the family to make plans for what they will need to pay bills.

We will be preparing bagged lunches for the Melting Pot on the last Thursday in November (Nov. 30). The youth plan to be our base for volunteer help. Date and time of the prep is still to be determined.

The Joint Nativity Project with Central Baptist Church is on. There will be displays in both churches from a many different countries. Dates are January 10-13, January 17-20, January 24-27, and February 21-24.

St. John's has a table for the NAACP Banquet on Friday, November 17. Reverent Laura said it would be nice if we could fill it up (it is a table for 8). Shelley and I have tentatively agreed to attend.

There was discussion on how to disburse the remaining funds in the outreach budget. Suggestions included The River, Good Samaritan, and Family Promise.

## **Pastoral Care Report – Jackie Mabrey, Chair, Pastoral Care Committee; Rita Plemmons, Vestry Liaison**

The Pastoral Care Committee at St. John's strives to promote the health and strength of the body of Christ through compassionate care of each other, attentiveness to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of all members, and providing help and support to those who are sick, bereaved, homebound, lonely or in any kind of crisis or trouble. If you are interested in this ministry, please contact the church office or Jackie Mabrey at [jackiemabrey@gmail.com](mailto:jackiemabrey@gmail.com). On-going programs include the following:

Care Packages – packages are mailed to our college and boarding school students periodically to remind them of the love and support from their church home.

Altar Flowers – the flowers from the altar each week are made into smaller arrangements and delivered to members as a gesture of love and support in a time of sadness or illness or even celebration.

Prayer List – while published weekly in the service bulletin, the list is reviewed each month by the committee to see if other needs are required by those on the list.

e-Care Team – a group of members ready to spring into action when alerted by email if there is a need for meal deliveries or other specific immediate care needs.

Card Ministry – get well, sympathy, congratulations and “thinking of you ”cards are mailed to members each month once the committee is alerted about a life event.

Memorial Chapel – located in the bell tower, on the side of the chapel. Many of you have visited it for quiet prayer. There is a kneeler and a votive stand available for private use. Also, there is an opportunity to have a memorial plaque made for loved ones who have died. If you are interested in having this remembrance for your loved ones, please contact Rita Plemmons at [retp62@gmail.com](mailto:retp62@gmail.com) with their name, dates of life and a quote that speaks to you about them.

## **Hospitality – Anne Koehler, Vestry Liaison**

We at St. John's appreciate the presence and the talents of our members. Artwork and needlework created by our members is always on display in the coffee shop. It changes every three months. It is scheduled by Anne Koehler, so contact her if you want to hang a gallery showing of your work. The GAIN table of delicious snacks is provided by contributing members after the 10:30 a.m. service. (GAIN is an acronym for Getting Acquainted Is Nice.) Nick schedules GAIN on the service preference sheets he sends out. Finally, we want to have a Greeter welcoming you before every service. Our Senior Warden arranges greeters.

## **Communication – Hugh Webb, Vestry Liaison**

There are three primary modes of communication at St. John's. The weekly service leaflet and the weekly email newsletter, published by the church office, provide announcements of upcoming events in the parish. The quarterly journal, written and edited by Katy Pindzola, gives an in-depth look at events that have taken place in the parish and recognizes milestones in the lives of parishioners.