

**St. John's Episcopal Church  
Ashfield, Massachusetts  
Annual Report for 2025**



**205th Annual Meeting  
Sunday, February 8, 2026**

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*“One day tells its tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge to another.”  
Psalm 19*

## **Agenda for the 205th Annual Meeting**

- Call to Order - Sue Craft
- 2026 Budget Presentation - Raven Harris
- Report of the Nominating Committee - Andy Wickline
- Election of Vestry & Officers - Andy Wickline
- “Resilience and Learning: Reflections on 2025” - The Rev. Mark Hatch
- Expressions of Gratitude - Addison Hall
- Motion to Adjourn the 205th Annual Meeting - Sue Craft

## **Minutes for the 204th Annual Meeting**

**St. John’s Vestry Team**  
**Minutes of the Annual Meeting**  
February 2, 2025

Twenty in attendance and one on Zoom.

11:20 Sue Craft called us to our pews for the 204<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.  
Opening prayer: “Draw your church together, Oh, God.”

### **Budget (Raven Harris)**

- We have a level-funded budget, although it’s hard to predict our income. It is hard to budget for the Holy Spirit.
- We have a deficit of \$20,000, which is similar to last year.
- To put this in context, the net assets of the parish have doubled. This includes the Third century fund bequests and the Ryan Scholarship Fund which we are incubating. This is our last year of the agreement with the Ryan Scholarship Fund.
- We are working with a consultant, Stephen Hasbrook, to improve our reports – to better show our streams of income and to make the reports easier to understand.
- We have \$200,000 in unrestricted reserves.
- Susan Todd said she is grateful to Raven and Amy, and she mentioned that we give about 20% of our budget to mission. We give about \$7000 to other organizations. For example, each backpack in Love in a Backpack costs about \$100.
- Are we incubating Love in a Backpack? We are not sure.
- Mary Seager gifted to us her house in Heath with an assessed value of \$118,000. We have permission from the diocese to sell the house for at least \$100,000.

- Jodi Hall: Question about SPIN (soap and paper initiative). These products are valued by clients at the food pantry. We need to talk about how to make this a better outreach/mission.
- Raven continued: Stephen Hasbrook used to do our audits. He now recommends that we do a three-person internal parish audit. We are looking for people to be on that committee. The audit has to be in by July 1, 2025. For example, the audit determines whether transactions are documented properly. There is a straight-forward questionnaire. It takes about two hours, maybe longer with a committee.

### **Nominating committee report (Maddy Roberts)**

Co-senior Wardens: Sue Craft and Susan Todd

Junior Warden: Madeleine Roberts

Clerk: Lynnette Sievert

Treasurer: Raven Harris

We need an assistant treasurer.

Vestry members: Jane Wagener, Andy Wickline, Lucinda Brown, Kay Spencer, Kevin Blanchard, Darlene Monds

Convention delegates: Andy and Kristen Wickline. Alternate: Susan Todd.

There was a unanimous vote in support of the slate (with Steven Wilco abstaining).

### **Steven Wilco [Interim Canon to the Ordinary at the Diocese]**

Here to talk about the process and what happens next, regarding the next vicar.

#### **Started with two questions: Why are you here? Why St. John's in Ashfield?**

- Grounding in the Christian faith
- One of the highlights of my life
- The Lutheran church is too far away.
- For the people. The people are wonderful. Caring people.
- Because I know everybody now.
- It is an intimate, beautiful setting
- Community is really important.
- You should go to your local parish.
- The church was here when we needed it.
- I feel embraced and supported by this community.
- The music is fabulous.

#### **Where do you hope St. John's will be in three to five years?**

- With more people
- Mission outreach will remain strong.
- Convey more of what we have to people in the community.

- Continue to be a beacon of hope, a manifestation of love, and a place of welcome.
- Another mission trip.
- Every Sunday offering prayers for towns [plural] to reflect the community of people who come from outside Ashfield.

**Steven Wilco: Where we are in the process**

- Post-COVID institutions are less resilient
- Think carefully and well together with Diocesan support.
- Slow down and think about the future. Find a priest for one year. It is hard to find folks to serve ¼ time, and we try to honor the retired priests' retirement.
- Take the year to do some planning together. Maybe she will stay longer. Maybe we need to explore other options.
- One thing that needs to be on the table is that we may need to share a priest.
- Property may be on the table, but not for this congregation.
- Question: is there a magic number when things are just too small? Is closure in the future?
- We have a thriving vision and sense of mission, a lot of ways to keep things going.
- There is a new Bishop coming in.
- This church wouldn't exist if you look at the numbers in the late nineteenth century.
- (Susan Todd) Sue and I have worked steadily with the over-riding goal of making sure this church endures. Our assets have doubled. Everyone has been asking, how can we help?
- (Raven) Our presence is bigger than our numbers suggest.
- (Susan Todd) When Vicki was on sabbatical, a visiting priest said to us, you should write a book!
- (Steven Wilco) I will continue to work with the wardens and vestry.

Addison Hall facilitated our expressions of gratitude, which have been going on all through this meeting.

- Addison has been researching Titus Strong. Gratitude that St. James in Greenfield lent their rector to St. John's for 1/3 of his time as we were just getting started.
- Jane Kaufman read her letter to Vicki in appreciation. "You truly walk in love."
- For Julie Meservey and her tremendous leadership.
- For Duane Nyman and for his music.
- For Sue Craft and her comforting pastoral presence.
- For new and returning vestry members, and that people are involved.
- A shout out to the co-senior wardens, Sue and Susan.

- The presence of Lis Henry is such a gift at this time.
- For the Toothaker family coming and staying, for their kids, and for being so involved.
- For our history series spearheaded by Addison, calling to our attention the lives of people who have been in this place. And for Lucinda producing the booklets. Thanks to Addison for encouraging us in this process.
- For our music, especially Julie and Duane, and for the pieces Duane writes for us.
- For Kay and Kevin and for their voices during communion.
- For Maddy, Dar, and Jim for the care of our buildings.
- For Raven, with his expertise, stepping up to the plate to help us with our finances.

Steven Wilco gave the closing prayer. “Holy one, for all the ways you have led us to this moment, and for the moments ahead. ... the way your love is embodied in this small and beautiful community.”

12:27 Meeting adjourned by Sue Craft.

## **Parish Statistics and Nominations**

Baptisms: 0  
 Renewal of Vows: 0  
 Marriages: 0  
 Confirmations: 0

Burials/Interments: 3

- Betsy Carlisle
- Robert Holden, St. John’s Memorial Garden
- Susan Wade

Numbers of Services Held: 61 w/ an additional 3 private communions

### **Total Attendance at All Services by Year:**

2005: 2770  
 2006: 2264  
 2007: 2248  
 2008: 2269  
 2009: 1923  
 2010: 2006  
 2011: 1520  
 2012: 1227  
 2013: 1291  
 2014: 1411  
 2015: 1475

2016: 1327  
2017: 1789  
2018: 1946  
2019: 2570  
2020: 2242  
2021: 1980  
2022: 2353 (in-person & online)  
2023: 1673 (278 online)  
2024: 1592 (294 online)  
**2025: 1645 (292 online)**

Total Sunday Services: 52 (2 online-only)  
Total Sunday Attendance: 1353 in-person, 292 online  
Average Sunday Attendance: 27 in-person, 6 online

### **Vestry for 2025**

Co-Senior Wardens: Sue Craft and Susan Todd  
Junior Warden: Madeleine Susi Roberts  
Vestry Clerk: Lynnette Leidy Sievert  
Treasurer: Raven Harris  
Assistant Treasurer: Jody Skinger Hall  
Vestry Members: Kevin Blanchard, Lucinda Brown, Darlene Monds, Kay Spencer, Jane Wagener, Andrew Wickline

### **Nominations for 2026**

Co-Senior Wardens: Sue Craft and Susan Todd  
Junior Warden: Madeleine Susi Roberts  
Vestry Clerk: Darlene Monds  
Treasurer: Raven Harris  
Vestry Members: Lynette Sievert, Jane Wagener, Andy Wickline  
Annual Convention Delegates: Andy & Kristen Wickline; Alternate: Susan Todd

## **Reflections On a Year**

The Holy Spirit has continued to work its mysterious and animating grace at St. John's during this past year of ministry together, however and wherever the winds of the world and the gusts of challenge have blown and blustered. With the friendship, support, and collaboration of the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas and the Rev. David DeSmith, there has been a remarkable and special continuity of coverage in our sacramental life. The very same holds true for the beautiful and ongoing musical and vocal offerings, both before and since the retirement of Duane Nyman. The loveliness of these varied and spirited offerings, and the ways in which they arise, speak deeply to the culture of St. John's and to the underlying confidence in God and in one another. This is a very precious element of

our ethos and of our community, and a way of life that we are wise to cherish. Such “gifting”, of and by the Spirit, appears in innumerable ways. Too many to name specifically lest I miss something or someone. But you know who and what and how you are, and the love you offer is a wondrous blessing in these troubled times.

In the spirit of brevity, I would simply like to name three core areas of St. John’s that, aside from always deserving merit, speak to me of what I find and have found over the last 8 or so years that I have been connected here in some way. This is not exclusive, of course, but it does feel vital. To me, these are the three areas around which St. John’s mobilizes and is renewed.

First, worship and sacrament remain central. This might seem obvious, but the reality is not always so, especially in times of transition and growth. The depth of care, the genuine and quiet reverence, the attention to the seasons, the mysterious allure of sacred space. Whatever the moment or moments, we gather, and we commune – literally. No community can survive long without human connection, and the ways in which we meet one another, on many levels, in and around worship of every kind, remains both utterly essential and deeply held.

Second, mission and outreach continue to serve not only as a “hands and heart” in the world, but as a barometer (in my experience) of spiritual health. The degree to which any congregation, whatever its size or shape, focuses outward, is an indicator of spiritual vitality, hope, belief, and health. Yes, there will always be a need for the inward and practical and business end of things; this too is a vital ministry. But as long as the balance remains heavily tipped towards the “out there”, it has been my lived experience that all shall be well, whatever the occasional ups or downs. From the beginning of my time in Ashfield, now two Vicars ago, St. John’s has always evidenced and lived a deep commitment to addressing the needs of the wider community, the troubles of the world, the striving for justice, and a belief in the Kingdom. Please don’t ever lose sight of this, for this is who you are.

Third, and perhaps most mysterious, I continue to find that St. John’s is a resilient, adaptable, pliant and curious community. That might sound sterile or even vague, but this way of being is essential to who we are. Of course, not every change or challenge is so simple or amenable. Not every pivot or shift or reach is flawless, smooth, or without its occasional disagreements. But on the whole, a very large whole I should add, this congregation seems always open to possibility, curious to consider ways to respond, adaptable (yes, we sometimes grumble but far more often we celebrate...) to both the shifting sands of spiritual life and the unknown path which bends just around the proverbial corner. Such flexibility and creativity, this degree of possibility, the capacity even to imagine that “we don’t always have to do it this way”, will be one of the very

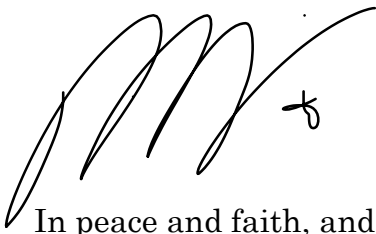
greatest gifts given to a visitor, newcomer, new Vicar, new Bishop, unexpected outreach request, and so on. Holding fast both to wise discernment and yet spirited enthusiasm can sometimes elicit an institutional tension. But by and large, as a resilient and adaptable congregation, St. John's lives the lovely if strange paradox of Gospel certainty amid a very uncertain world. Stay on this path.

In a recent message to me and to us, Margaret put it very beautifully: *"It was a blessing to stand at the altar and celebrate the Eucharist again, which I had had few opportunities to do during my nearly ten years as diocesan Missioner for Creation Care. It was likewise a blessing to preach the Gospel and to share my faith in the Jesus Movement during this violent, chaotic time in our nation's history. I treasure the congregation of St. John's."*

So do I.

After all: *"where your treasure lies, there shall your heart be also."* ~ Matthew 6:21

And here we are.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M Hatch', with a small flourish at the end.

In peace and faith, and on behalf of all of us,

Rev. Mark Hatch

Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

Rev. David DeSmith

## **Co-Senior Wardens' Report**

When we began this year, we could not have imagined the abundant blessings we were to receive over the next 12 months from so many people and corners of our common life. It was as though the Holy Spirit determined that the people of St. John's would not be daunted by having found themselves in a transitional period, following the ending of the treasured ministry of The Rev. Vicki Ix.

Almost from the day Vicki left, people began stepping up to help. Following these introductory paragraphs, you will find the Story of 2025, as it appeared in our Stewardship mailing, with just a few edits to update information. This record is here for

our archives, as it covers a great deal of specific points, and in it you will be reminded or learn of the many people and moments that have led us to this time of unexpected strength. To each of them we owe enormous gratitude.

There are four we would like to honor here, especially:

Our Supply-Partnerships Priests:

- The Rev. Mark Hatch
- The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas
- The Rev. David DeSmith

The Canon to the Ordinary from our Diocese:

- The Rev. Steven Wilco

Their profound spiritual gifts, remarkable wisdom and loving kindness have made all the difference over the past year, inviting us to envision a bright, sun-filled future for St. John's.

## **The Story of 2025**

*“May the Lord direct your heart unto God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.”*

*Thessalonian 3:5*

Dear Friends, Near and Far,

“Grateful Joy”

This phrase is lifted from the reflection written in 1827 by Jonathan Lilly, Clerk of St. John's and its Master Builder, following the first service in the sanctuary where we now worship. The passage is printed at the end of this message for you to consider. Each sentence in it seems to offer wisdom in the bottle for those who were to come after him. We well understand what he meant when he marveled on the “few individuals which commenced so great an undertaking.” We are reminded that great accomplishments can be achieved by a few. We continue to feel “grateful joy” for all the generosity you have bestowed upon our small parish in time, talent, treasure, and loving thoughts from afar. Thank you more than we can ever say.

**Our Farewell to Vicki.** This year began with having to wish our beloved Vicki Godspeed as she ended her ministry with us on January 5, after nearly 7 deeply enriching years. We were all heartbroken to let her go, but astoundingly there came a rush of people almost out of the blue coming forward to help, to pitch in:

- Andy Wickline led us in Compline on two Wednesday evenings following Vicki's last day – allowing us to come together as a community to absorb this loss together.
- Four people agreed to join the vestry during this transitional period. – Kevin Blanchard, Lucinda Brown, Darlene Monds, and Kay Spencer. Mid-way through the year Jody Hall agreed to serve as our Assistant Treasurer, to support the work of our Treasurer, Raven Harris.
- During Lent Andy and Kristen Wickline led us in Compline every Thursday evening and taught us how to make prayer beads one Saturday morning.
- The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas and the Rev. Mark Hatch created the model of a supply priest partnership to make sure our worship continued seamlessly.
- Steven Wilco, Canon to the Ordinary, stayed in constant touch with the wardens, guiding us at every turn during this period.
- Bishop Fisher met with the Wardens before his regularly scheduled visit and lifted our spirits.
- The Rev. David DeSmith joined Mark Hatch in continuing our supply priest partnership model into the winter of 2026.
- Our liturgy team was mightily strengthened under the amazing leadership of Maddy Roberts to make sure our hymns were chosen and the liturgical seasons were acknowledged at every turn.
- Andrea Caluori-Barth brought us together to discuss Dante's Inferno and to delight in the poetry of William Cullen Bryant and St. Francis. She also inspired an Easter brunch.
- Lis Henry, our Parish Administrator, has continued to transform the essential infrastructure of our parish with grace and the artist's touch. She makes sure we are thinking "around the bend."

**Looking Outward.** Mark Hatch reminded us that it can be so easy only to look inward when confronted with such a loss as facing the ending of Vicki's ministry with us. "It is important to look outward," he said. And that's what we tried to do – physically and metaphorically and spiritually. Using the generous bequest of former Secretary of State George Shultz, we contracted with the remarkable Jade Mortimer to restore all the windows of our church. All of the windows are now beautifully re-installed, ready to last another 200 years.

**Love in a Backpack Bulges.** For over nine years the Love in a Backpack project has provided backpacks filled with items to help women move from incarceration to community. This year the project has expanded under the dedicated leadership of Jenny Burke. We have received over \$20,000 in grants to support this work and have established partnerships with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and the Foundation for Community

Justice to this end. We now will be providing backpacks for the men in Franklin County and cellphones for those in need. We are beginning a partnership with Greenfield Savings Bank, as well.

### **An Array of Activities:**

- We continue to raise money for the Ahmadi family and welcomed them at a community picnic in the summer.
- We participated in the Pride Walk in June.
- We continued our ACT partnership and joined with the Congregational Church in honoring the Jamaican farm workers from Clark Orchards.
- We navigated the new FRCOG health regulations for Fall Festival.
- We celebrated Annie Cheatham's new book, *This Way Daybreak Comes: Women's Values and the Future*.
- In April we led a Sacred Stroll on a new trail off Route 112.
- Our own Elle Morgan became an ordained priest!

**History Moments.** In last year's letter we promised that we would provide the third volume of the history series that Addison Hall and Lucinda Brown have shepherded so brilliantly. This volume profiles the priests who have touched the lives of St. John's from its founding until the present. The publication will take a bit longer to complete so you may expect it for certain in 2026.

**The Gift of a Home.** Imagine being given a house? Over a year ago we became aware that Mary Seager, a long-time summer resident of Heath and faithful parishioner of St. John's, wanted to bequeath her home to us, the proceeds of which she asked to be contributed to our Third Century Fund. During the third week of November the closing occurred, and the funds were directed as she wished. This is an incredible gift – one that has offered us a chance to remember Mary through tending to the home she loved and contributing over \$100,000 to our endowment, increasing the fund to well over \$350,000, far beyond our original goal. We are immensely thankful for the help of Phil Pless, Dick Evans, Wanda Mooney, Shalee Pratt, Kseniya Savina, and the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts, who guided us through this complicated process. And most of all, we are thankful to Mary, for her kindness.

**Inviting Church.** We thank Kay Spencer for inspiring us to establish a new ministry that would encourage us to find new ways to reach out to members of our community, particularly children and families. We opened our Sunday morning coffee hour to our neighbors, and we provided a children's table, full of activities, during Farmer's Market. This Saturday morning initiative was particularly successful as it not only attracted children with bubbles, Legos, and Magna-tiles, but the adults in their lives, as well,

leading to many levels of conversation! On March 1st we will welcome a group of children performing Irish dances during coffee hour, perhaps create a handbell choir, and explore the possibility of holding Jazz Vespers.

**The Sundays following Duane Nyman's last service at St. John's.** We all carried such sadness, having to say goodbye and thank you to Duane on the last Sunday of October. He has filled our worshiping souls with beautiful music for seven years. The Sunday after his retirement, however, Lynnette Sievert played the prelude and postlude on the piano, Kevin played his recorder while Sue Craft held his book of music, and the Madrigals and parishioners sang their hearts out. This is surely another example of the pluckiness and creativity of the people of St. John's in the midst of a transitional time in its long life.

***“Wisdom does not reside in one mind.”***  
***Ghanaian proverb***

**“Uninterrupted Integrity”** “May it ever hold fast in uninterrupted integrity” was a tall order for St. John's, floated to us from the past by Jonathan Lilly in his poetic statement 200 years ago. There seem to be two definitions of integrity:

- The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.
- The state of being whole and undivided.

We, the people of St. John's today, have surely been given a legacy of integrity by our forebears and are dedicated to that heritage. As a vestry and parish, we seek to listen to each other to keep ourselves on a Godly path and when we direct our funds to any aspect of our common life, we work together to make certain we do so with intentionality.

**“We punch above our weight”** This phrase came from Raven Harris when we were participating in our parish conversation about what we value at St. John's. We hope that you will remember this as you prayerfully consider your pledge to St. John's and that you will be reassured that we are doing all that we can to use your contributions wisely in order to realize the hopes of nurturing God's kingdom around us. If you have never given before, we hope that you might consider a gift as you ponder how St. John's impacted your life at moments in your life.

### **Our ingathering was held on December 7.**

We end as we began this story, with grateful joy for your continued generosity to the life of St. John's Church and with blessings to you from the Wardens and Vestry.

***“Whoever refreshes others, will be refreshed.”***  
***Proverbs 11:25***

### ***37. For Prisons and Correctional Institutions***

Lord Jesus, for our sake you were condemned as a criminal: Visit our jails and prisons with your pity and judgment. Remember all prisoners, and bring the guilty to repentance and amendment of life according to your will, and give them hope for their future. When any are held unjustly, bring them release; forgive us, and teach us to improve our justice. Remember those who work in these institutions; keep them humane and compassionate; and save them from becoming brutal or callous. And since what we do for those in prison, O Lord, we do for you, constrain us to improve their lot. All this we ask for your mercy's sake. *Amen.*

### ***38. For the Right Use of God's Gifts***

Almighty God, whose loving hand *hath* given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor *thee* with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of *thy* bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

***“On the opening of this church for the worship of Almighty God for the first time, many were the sensations that rushed upon the mind when reflecting upon the few individuals which commenced so great an undertaking. The limitations of their means and the difficulties and opposition they had to encounter, and now to see it completed they could but exclaim, ‘Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.’ Long may it stand! May peace ever be within its walls and plenteousness within her palaces. May it ever hold fast in uninterrupted integrity the profession of that faith which was once delivered to the saints. And for ages yet to come may faithful and devout Christians, Church men and women of the school of the apostles, looking back with grateful joy on the noble works done for them by the God of their Fathers, confess and say with fervent adoration and gratitude, ‘Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.’”***

*Jonathan Lilly,*

*Clerk of St. John’s and Master Builder of our parish home.*

## **Buildings & Grounds Report**

2025 was the year of the windows. Beginning in May, Jade Mortimer of Heartwood Window Restoration removed each window sash, repaired or replaced broken panes, and repainted and reinstalled them. The final windows were reinstalled on December 22. This project was funded in large part by a bequest from the estate of former Secretary of State, George Shultz, who was committed to the care of the environment.

Also this year, we installed two fans in the ceiling of the church. These fans make the furnace more effective by circulating air. During the summer, we change the direction of

the fan in the back of the sanctuary so it pushes air downward, which provides cooling on hot summer days. To prevent the noisy blower on the furnace from interrupting readings, I have programmed the thermostat to go up to 70 degrees at 7am on Sundays, and then to turn down to 65 degrees at 10am.

This year also included two unplanned expenses related to plumbing issues at the Corner House. In May, tree roots blocked the sewer pipe in the front yard, resulting in a full system backup. A month later, a valve in the water heater broke, causing a major leak and a large water bill. Unlike capital projects, these expenses are not an investment in our buildings, but they are still a reality of owning property. However, keeping up with maintenance and making proactive investments in capital projects greatly reduces the number of expensive surprises that occur.

With gratitude,  
Maddy Roberts, Junior Warden

## **Pastoral Care Report**

*All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.*

*Julian of Norwich, Mystic  
Revelations of Divine Love*

The Pastoral Care Team continues to serve our church community in various ways. Some on the team are Lay Eucharist Visitors (LEV) and have taken communion to those unable to attend church. Visiting and meals have been provided when needed. Check in calls have been made. The Prayer Team continues to pray for those in need. This year, without a called vicar, the diocese has helped connect us to The Rev Jane Beebe, Deacon who will provide the ministrations for those near death. Our Prayer Shawl ministry is an important part of our ministry providing those who receive a handmade shawl reassurance that their church family prays for them.

Thank you,  
Sue Craft, Jane Wagener, Darlene Monds, Jane Buckloh, the Rev Jane Dunning, Susan Todd, Andy and Kristin Wickline.

## Mission Report

*Salt and light look different on the surface, but they both fulfill their powerful natures by giving away or losing themselves. Being salt and light reminds us that no matter how broken or broken hearted by the world's suffering, we are love and most ourselves when giving ourselves away.*

*Carmen Acevedo Butcher  
From the weekly meditations  
of Richard Rohr.*

This year the Mission Team was allocated \$6,000 to be given away.

As we talked, it seemed as if everywhere we look in our community, state and beyond, people are hurting, people are frightened and the traditional places they turn to for help are on hold to help or have very limited resources. Our choices this year reflect those concerns. Below is the list of the financial gifts St John's Vestry approved.

Hilltown Churches Food Pantry \$1,000

PO Box 161

Ashfield, MA. 01339

The Food Pantry serves about 10 towns and is supported by local churches.

This year saw a significant increase in the number of people using the pantry.

LifePath \$400

101 Munson St. Suite 201

Greenfield, MA 01301

LifePath provides support to caregivers and elders in their homes with homemaking and personal care as well as helping with emergencies.

The Resilience Center of Franklin County \$250

17 Long Ave

Greenfield, MA 01301

The Resilience Center of FC provides resources, counseling, 24/7 hotline services, support groups and more to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Episcopal Relief and Development \$1,400

PO Box 5121

Boone, IA 50950-0121

Episcopal Relief and Development works with church parishes, local and worldwide to save lives and transform communities. This year we are giving our donation to Refugee Services.

Shelburne Falls Senior Center \$200

7 Main St.

Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

The Senior Center serves seniors from Ashfield, Buckland and Shelburne. Among their many programs are those providing transportation to medical appointments and shopping, home repair, free of charge, home visits by a social worker as well as meals, exercise classes and entertainment.

Community Action Fuel Assistance \$1,350

393 Main St.

Greenfield, MA 01361

This program offers financial and emergency oil for low-income people in Franklin County

Thresholds \$25

4101 Ravenswood Ave

Chicago, IL, 60631

Thresholds is committed to helping people with mental illness. They are based in Chicago with sites in other parts of the country. This donation is made in memory of Robert Hall.

Mary Lyon Foundation. \$100

26 Ashfield Rd.

Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

The Mary Lyon Foundation promotes student success by mobilizing community involvement in services and programs that create positive educational outcomes in rural communities.

The Western N.E. Food Bank \$500

25 Carao St.

Chicopee, MA 01020

The Food Bank distributes food to area food banks.

Community Supported Agriculture, CISA \$250

1 Sugarloaf St.

South Deerfield, MA 01373

CISA strengthens farms and builds the local food economy in Western Mass.

Jewish Family Services \$350

15 Lenox St, Springfield, MA 01108

Jewish Family Services focus on supporting New Americans, helping seniors age well and providing mental health support.

Stone Soup Cafe \$175

PO Box 57

Greenfield, MA. 01302

Stone Soup Cafe operates out of All Souls Church. It is a pay-what-you-can cafe that serves healthy, locally sourced meals every Saturday, offering curbside pickup and delivery for those unable to attend in person.

Thank you for your support of our mission giving.

Sue Craft, Jane Wagener, Gary Partenheimer, Michael Corrigan

## **St. John's Madrigal Singers**

The St. John's Madrigal Singers (SJMS) have enjoyed another productive and exciting year. Our dedicated group of singers meet for rehearsal every Saturday and perform at each Sunday service, with additional music prepared and performed during Christmas and Holy Week. SJMS performs mostly a capella works arranged for SSA.

This past year, St. John's purchased a membership in St. Jame's Press—a music publisher specializing in sacred music for choirs. This has allowed us to access a variety of new arrangements to learn and perform throughout the year. Many thanks to all involved in making that happen and to Lis Henry, specifically, for cheerfully printing out new music for us—sometimes at a moment's notice.

At the end of October, Duane Nyman, our esteemed organist, retired. Duane has been an integral part of SJMS and we are truly grateful to him for all he has done for us, including allowing us to perform some of his own marvelous compositions that he has shared with us. His piece, "Hear my Prayer" has become a favorite of SJMS. Last year, we reported that our singers were learning a second piece composed by Duane, "Psalm 121". This glorious piece came together beautifully for our singers and we performed it more than once during this past year. Duane has composed two additional pieces that he has shared with SJMS and we are delighted. Plans are underway to record Duane's pieces with the help of a local sound engineer. This is an exciting opportunity and we are looking forward to the experience and grateful to Duane for continuing to work with us as we go forward.

Many thanks to our talented singers: Sue Craft, Susan Todd, Maddy Roberts, Sylvia White, Kay Spencer, Jane Kaufman, Lynnette Sievert, and to Kevin Blanchard who graciously joined us for some of our larger pieces. And deep gratitude to our Wardens,

Vestry Team, and to all of our church family for their continued support and encouragement.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Ryan Meservey

January, 2026

## **Love in a Backpack**

### **2025 Year-End Impact Report**

Prepared by Jennifer Burke, Outreach Coordinator

### **Mission**

Love in a Backpack exists to support individuals re-entering society after incarceration by providing backpacks filled with essential supplies and dignity-centered resources that help stabilize the critical first days of release.

### **Program Impact**

#### **Backpacks Distributed**

- 170 backpacks packed and distributed in 2025, the highest annual total to date.
- Backpacks included hygiene supplies, weather-appropriate additions, shelf stable food, personal care items, and a small bible.
- Distribution expanded through stronger collaboration with re-entry staff at the Franklin County Jail, while we continued to support our long standing relationship with Western Mass Regional Women's Correctional Center in Chicopee.

#### **New Program Expansion: Phone Access Initiative**

- Thanks to a Ministry Development grant we launched a cell phone donation program in Franklin County to address a major re-entry barrier: lack of communication access.
- 14 phones along with 3 months of service were donated to individuals leaving incarceration.
- Phones are prepped for immediate use so participants can contact employers, housing resources, medical providers, and family members upon release.
- We are the only organization to donate phones without requirements attached to the participants needs.

## **Community Partnerships & Funding**

### **Returning Grant Support**

- Renewed funding from:
  - Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts
  - Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts

### **New Grant Awards**

- Greenfield Savings Bank — new funder supporting re-entry programming.
- ABC Clothing Shop — new funding to expand services into Berkshire County, allowing Love in a Backpack to begin regional growth beyond Franklin and Hampden Counties.

## **Private Donors & Community Support**

Love in a Backpack is sustained not only by grants and institutional partners, but by extraordinary generosity from individuals and local communities.

This year we received handmade soap donations from a private donor in New York, whose parents learned about Love in a Backpack and shared our mission beyond state lines. These deeply personal contributions reflect the human network that now surrounds this program.

The Ashfield community continues to be the backbone of Love in a Backpack. Congregation members and town residents contributed thousands of dollars in physical supplies and monetary donations, ensuring that backpacks were filled with dignity-centered, high-quality items. Just as importantly, community members donated countless volunteer hours — packing backpacks, writing notes of encouragement, and stepping in whenever urgent needs arose.

This grassroots support has transformed Love in a Backpack from a small initiative into a reliable, community-powered re-entry support program.

## **Program Development & Listening Work**

### **Franklin County Jail Focus Groups**

- Successfully designed and facilitated two focus groups at the Franklin County Jail.
- Gathered first-hand feedback from incarcerated individuals about:
  - Re-entry challenges
  - Gaps in available services
  - Desired resources upon release

- Feedback is now shaping 2026 program upgrades, including expanded communication tools, information resources, and job-readiness support.

## **Special Initiatives**

### **Angel Tree Holiday Program**

- Took on last-minute coordination of the Angel Tree gift-giving program.
- Ensured gifts were provided for 10 children with incarcerated parents.
- Redirected surplus donations toward purchasing books in 2026 for individuals currently incarcerated, extending the program's impact beyond the holidays.

## **Looking Ahead to 2026**

Plans for the coming year include:

- Expanding backpack distribution numbers while maintaining quality and dignity-focused contents.
- Growing the Phone Access Initiative with new device partners and carriers.
- Launching service in Berkshire County through ABC Clothing Shop partnership.
- Expanding Love in a Backpack services based on focus-group feedback.
- Focusing grant research to serve Hampshire County
- Planning a 2026 community forum in partnership with the Franklin County Jail focused on broader societal challenges.

## **Closing**

2025 marked a turning point for Love in a Backpack. What began as a simple act of care has become a multi-county re-entry support system rooted in listening, dignity, and practical impact. The expansion of services, increased funding base, and measurable growth demonstrate that Love in a Backpack is now positioned for sustainable, mission-driven expansion in 2026 and beyond.

## **Ashfield Fall Festival**

New health requirements were implemented this year for all food vendors. This caused some anxiety and concern about the feasibility of meeting these requirements. In the end, there was minimal impact on our Blueberry Cobbler sale. Darlene Monds completed the on-line certification for "Allergens Awareness" and was present for the FRCOG health inspection during the festival. Maddy Roberts was instrumental in all aspects of planning and being present for the festival including the acquisition and bagging of blueberries, schedules for volunteers, setting up, cobbler baking, serving, and cleaning up and take down. As always, Jane and Jim Wagener, Sue Craft, Susan Todd, and Lis Henry (our

wonderful Parish Administrator) devoted so much time and talent to various aspects of the event. We netted about \$4200 from the sale of 80 cobblers, coffee, and tea. It took a “whole village” of parishioners, friends, and family as well as good weather on Saturday to make this year a success. Thank you to all who contributed their time. A small group has been meeting to create a team approach to Fall Festival that would implement new ideas to making this yearly event more effective and easier to sustain going into the future.

## Ashfield Churches Together (ACT) Annual Report



St. John's Episcopal Church, Ashfield

First Congregational Church of Ashfield

### ASHFIELD CHURCHES TOGETHER

*Deepening our shared commitment to the Gospel*

**Thanks to Wendy Prée** who left ACT in October after four years of service for First Congregational. She will continue to advise ACT about joint program calendars and overall collaborations. We will miss you, Wendy, and thank you for your commitment to ACT and church collaborations in Ashfield.

**Welcome and thank you to Hetty Startup** who joined the ACT team in November for First Congregational. We appreciate your knowledge of both churches and your commitment to ACT collaborations.

### Collaborations in 2025

**Share the Warmth:** Both churches contributed clothing and warm bedding for Food Pantry. *Winter*

**Love in a Backpack** Coordinated by St. John's with contributions and volunteers from First Church. *Ongoing*

**Lenten Prayer for the World** Both churches shared a prayer during Lent. *March-April*

**The Wall Between** A study group on Middle East, using the book as guide. Three sessions. *March*

**Sacred Stroll Earth Day.** *April*

**Buz Eisenburg on Immigration Issues** Co-sponsored community discussion. *April*

**Franklin Pride March.** Representatives from both churches carried banners and walked together. *June*

**Picnic for the Ahmadi Family** Community wide event. *August*

**Ahmadi Family Resettlement** Continued posting stories about them to our congregations and in the Ashfield News. Raised over \$10,000 in 2025. *Ongoing*

**Town's Response to ICE** Meetings attended by several ACT team members. *Aug-Oct.*

**Picnic for Jamaican Farmworkers** A community wide event. *September*

**Joint Ad in The Ashfield News** Wishing peace and joy for all. *December*

**Representatives on the ACT team:** Susan Todd and Sue Craft, Co-Wardens at St. John's; Rev. David Jones, Minister, Annie Cheatham, Trustee, Bruce Bennett, Deacon, Wendy Prée, Clerk, and Hetty Startup, Deacon from First Congregational

## **Hilltown Churches Food Pantry**

Even in the midst of a year of food insecurity and upheaval the Hilltown Churches Food Pantry has been thriving thanks to our amazing community support and dedication to the idea that we need to take care of our little corner of the world. We primarily serve the 11 hill towns but will not turn anyone away that needs food, no one should go hungry in this caring rich community.

Our growth has been across many fields. From the Food Bank of Western Mass for the fiscal year 2023-2024 we got 84,630 lbs of food for a total price of \$2,490.99. The same categories for the next fiscal year of 2024-2025 we got 89,166 lbs. of food for a cost of \$2,584.37. You can see that we can really leverage our dollars at the Food Bank so no donation is too small.

This is only the tip of the iceberg for food. We have been helping our small local farmers by buying local from farms such as Our Family Farms, Bug Hill Farm, Fern Hill Farm, Atherton Farm, Porter Family Farm, Hatfield Beef, Wagner Farm, Just Roots, SideHill Farm, now under new ownership and renamed Macca Gene Farm. Many townsfolk have also planted an extra row and/or donated any surplus produce to our food pantry. Local folks feeding local folks, perfect. I apologize to anyone I've left out, you are appreciated.

Our client numbers have also grown. In 2024 we served 137 households while in 2025 it went up to 230. In response to our request for more volunteers we had a wonderful response. We have 35 active volunteers as well as a list of on call to cover for sick calls

and vacations. We have been able to add a packing crew so we can accommodate the Mary Lyon effort to delivery to those unable to come to the food pantry. We currently pack for about 60 families, no small task, we have 8 volunteers dedicated to this effort. Each family receives a bag of shelf stable goods, dairy, fresh produce, frozen meat and fresh Our Family Farms milk. We also serve about 70 in house clients.

Our fundraising efforts have been very successful due to the amazing generosity of our community members. This year we are in the process of adding a website with the ability to donate via Pay Pal now and soon Venmo. We are trying to keep up with the times and still maintain our hill town personality, so far it seems to be working, we are able to get the food out to those in need in a supportive, accepting environment.



We are so fortunate to be able to live in such an environment as the hill towns of Western Mass. Yes, we have significant problems but we rise to deal with them on a local level. We look forward to another year of getting the food out. If you or someone you know is in need send them to us and they will be taken care of. We also support a wellness clinic the first distribution of each month with participation from the Opioid Task Force. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the UCC Ashfield who have been faithful in their support of our mission, we couldn't do it without them.

Pat Thayer, Director, Hilltown Churches Food Pantry

## Ryan Scholarship Report

Information for St. John's Episcopal Church Annual Report 2025 at the Annual Meeting 2026  
St. John's served as the Fiduciary Agent until September 2025

Honoring Ryan Walsh Martel  
November 11, 1980 — March 4, 2022



**BACKGROUND:** In August 2023, Thad Bennett, Coordinator for The Ryan Scholarship, asked the leadership of St. John's if they would be the fiduciary agent for this new scholarship in Conway. They agreed because St. John's has a history of helping incubate and launch community efforts which need a fiduciary agent to get started. Thus, St. John's Episcopal Church has been working behind the scenes to help this scholarship effort. Donations via GoFundMe and checks have been made out to St. John's and The Ryan funds are being "kept separately" through normal accounting practices.

**UPDATE:** In September 2025 we agreed to work with the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts (CFWM) as our permanent fiduciary agent. St. John's transferred \$21,898.28 to CFWM on September 23rd.

The Ryan Scholarship will be awarded to the Conway high school graduating senior or to the person who was a Conway resident when they graduated from high school and is up to four years out from that graduation and who presents the best plan, through education or work, to lessen the impact of climate change and thus carry on Ryan's legacy. The scholarship honors Ryan Walsh Martel, who grew up in Conway, attended Conway Grammar School, Deerfield Academy, Bowdoin College and Georgetown University. He had an active career in environmental regulatory policy on state, national and international levels until his death from brain cancer in 2022. The scholarship is sponsored by the *Friends of the Field Memorial Library* in Conway.

## **Chairman's Report on Bicentennial Activity Committee**

This year presentations were made about former St. John's clergy, as follows: I about Titus Strong, Susan Todd about Lewis Green, Helena and Vanessa Snow about John Snow, Lucinda Brown about Gordon Dean, Mark Zenick about Susan Crampton, Philip Hall about Charles Whiston and Jane Kaufman about Phil Steinmetz. These are being compiled by Lucinda into a concluding booklet in our series of remembered saints of St. John's.

I think we will suspend bicentennial activities until we stage a concluding event in the fall of 2028 to observe the bicentennial of the consecration of the church building, which followed several years after it began to be used for worship.

If you have an idea for an activity that would enrich our program please speak to me or any of those listed above. Many thanks to everyone who has participated in the events and presentations of the past few years, and Happy 200th Birthday to all of us. Who knew we could be so old and so healthy.

For the Bicentennial Team,

Addison Hall

## Third Century Fund Report

We are pleased to provide this annual report on the Third Century Fund for 2025!

1. The balance in the Third Century Fund at the end of 2025 was \$373,919,28. The chart below shows the break out of the investments and the changes from where we started at the beginning of 2025, and where we ended 2025.
2. According to Vanguard’s website, the overall return on our investments was 5.9%. That’s not as strong as year-end 2024, but still a reasonable gain. And the additional deposits from gifts to the fund put us over the endowment’s principal threshold of \$300,000, making the amount over the threshold available for use, as intended.
3. We decided to keep the Settlement Fund in Vanguard in a money market account in 2025 because of the volatility in the stock markets on and off during the year.

Account:	Beginning Bal 2025	Ending Bal 2025	Change
<b>Settlement (Money Market) Account w/accrued dividends</b>	\$180,459.86	\$304,724.12	\$124,264.26
<b>Costco stock</b>	\$47,646.04	\$44,841.68	-\$2,804.36
<b>Intuitive Surgical stock</b>	\$22,444.28	\$24,353.48	\$1,909.20
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$250,550.18</b>	<b>\$373,919.28</b>	<b>\$123,369.10</b>

4. New deposits totaling \$104,802.75 were made to the Money Market account in 2025, and the investment returns for the year were \$8,159.59, including dividends and gains.

There is lots of additional information on the Vanguard account website if the Vestry would like information not provided here. Let us know if you need something.

Ted and Nancy are discussing whether to recommend that some portion of the Settlement Fund be put into more aggressive investments within Vanguard. When we meet again to discuss that, we’ll let you know our thinking.

Respectfully submitted:

Nancy Boyd. Ted Toothaker

# Sermon for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 18, 2025

Delivered by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas at St. John's Episcopal Church, Ashfield, MA

Acts 11:1-8

Psalm 148

Revelation 21:1-6

John 13:31-35

## The Jesus Movement

Years ago, when I was a young adult and completely baffled about my vocation – What was my life about? What kind of work did I want to do? What spiritual path, if any, did I want to follow? – I signed up for a workshop called “Opening the Heart.” For several weeks, a group of us met in a church parish hall, listening to a series of presentations and doing some guided meditation. One evening, the instructor explained that each of us had come into the world for a reason. Each of us had come here because there was something we needed to accomplish and to learn. She invited us to lie down on the floor, to relax our bodies and quiet our minds. Before long, the room fell silent. Then she invited us to imagine that before we came into the world, we chose who our parents would be. She asked us, why had we chosen our mother? Was there something we'd wanted to learn from our relationship with her? Why had we chosen our father? Was there something we'd wanted to learn from our relationship with him?

Answers floated into my mind as I lay there, reflecting in silence. Then came a final question: When the time came for us to be born, what had we come here to do? This time, the answer came through me with such unexpected force that I sat bolt upright and looked around in surprise. Surging through me was a single word: Love. The purpose of my life was to love. It was as simple and certain as that.

That experience turned out to be a touchstone moment – one of those moments when we have an experience that feels so vivid, so authentic and true that for the rest of our lives we can measure other religious experiences against it – do they feel similarly trustworthy and real? I came home that night knowing that whatever else I did with my life, I needed to follow a spiritual path that was about learning to love.

I mention this, of course, because our brief passage from John's Gospel is about as clear and straightforward as can be. Jesus is preparing to leave his friends. The hour of his passion and death are almost upon him. Judas has slipped out into the night to fetch the soldiers and temple police who will carry out the arrest. As the door closes behind Judas, Jesus turns to his disciples, not with anxiety or fear, nor with anger against the person

who will betray him, but with the same outpouring love that he expressed when he gave his body to them in the bread and wine, and when he humbly washed their feet. “I give you a new commandment,” he says, “that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

These are urgent and tender words, the words of someone facing death and eager to convey what really matters. Jesus repeats the command to love many times in the chapters that follow. “This is my commandment,” he says in John 15, “that you love one another as I have loved you.” “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” “I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another” (John 15:12, 14, 17).

Command, command, command – that’s a strong word, isn’t it? Most of us aren’t too fond of being commanded to do something. Besides, how can someone “command” us to love, as if loving feelings or even a loving intention could be forced upon us or could be turned on and off like a faucet? If we imagine God as a power-hungry boss up there there who wants to order us around and tell us what to do, then we’ll probably want to dig in our heels if such a God commands us to love. Not interested.

But the God whom Jesus knew and loved is no autocratic bully “out there” but rather a compelling and gentle Presence whom Jesus met in his depths and whom Jesus cherished within all things and beyond all things. I take Jesus’ “commandment” that we abide in his love, and that we love one another as he loves us, as a way to describe the structure of reality. Because we humans are made in the image of God, we are made from love, we come from love, and we return to love at our journey’s end. In the meantime, during the short span of this life, whenever we abide in love and act in love, we are being true to who we really are. I wonder if the so-called “commandment” to love might not actually express the deepest longing of our hearts.

In any case, when John the Evangelist was very old, that was the message he eagerly brought to one community of faith after another: “Little children, love one another.” After spending time with Jesus, after years of meditating on Jesus’ life and teaching, the aging evangelist could find no more direct route into the heart of the Gospel than simply to say, “Little children, love one another.”

It takes a lifetime to follow Jesus and learn to love, and it’s easy to get it wrong, doing things that aren’t a bit loving and holding back from doing things that are. So, it’s no wonder we need to keep returning to self-examination and prayer, returning to worship and to Christian community, returning to practices of humility and gratitude, to practices of courage and curiosity, so that we can make ourselves available again to God’s loving Presence and keep growing into the love that is who we really are. Whenever we do come

home to ourselves, whenever we do re-connect with the God who lives in our depths and in our midst, we discover again the sheer joy of saying the loving word that touches another person's heart. We know again the pleasure of giving ourselves in love to the people around us. We feel again the happiness that comes when we find ways to love other people wisely and well.

You know, there's something about God's love that always wants to expand, to go deeper and wider, to include people we might otherwise avoid. That's what we see in our reading from the Book of Acts, where Peter learns in a vision that followers of Jesus are called to reach beyond the borders of Judaism and to welcome and include Gentiles, as well, for the Holy Spirit is clearly at work among them, too. The circle of love gets larger still when we turn to Psalm 148 – one of my favorite psalms! – with its ecstatic portrayal of every element and every living creature glorifying God. The whole of Creation, from top to bottom and everywhere in between, is praising God and filled with God's love.

I'd like to say a word about last week's diocesan clergy conference, which was led by the Rev. Stephanie Spellers. You may recognize her name, for she spent nine years alongside Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, whose well-known catchphrase was "If it's not about love, it's not about God." With characteristic enthusiasm and verve, Stephanie summoned us and the whole Episcopal Church to embody the Jesus Movement. She argues that the Church is not a building and not an institution: it's meant to be a movement, just as surely as the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-apartheid movement, the Gay Rights movement, and all the other movements that have drawn people together to fight for justice and freedom. Stephanie laid out several reasons why more than ever we need to understand ourselves as a Jesus Movement, and I'll mention two.

First, we are presently living amidst a breathtaking degree of chaos, lies, corruption, and cruelty at the top levels of government. We brace ourselves for each day's news, watching aghast as the social safety net is shredded and people lose health care or go hungry, as farmers suffer, as millionaires and billionaires enrich themselves, as individuals are picked off by masked agents and whisked away without a hearing, as our public lands and waters and all the creatures that depend on them are opened up to brutal exploitation, as members of the executive branch push to seize control of every part of our common life and punish those who oppose them, harassing judges, law firms, universities, and the media. We need a Jesus Movement in a time like this – a movement of people rooted in the love of the God and ready to work for justice, since, as Dr. Cornel West famously put it, justice is what love looks like in public.

A second reason we need a Jesus Movement is because that resonates with young people. Stephanie recently spent two months traveling around the country and speaking with young people about their hopes and dreams and spiritual lives. She learned that many

young people don't trust the Church and they don't trust Christianity. What they do trust is Jesus. We need a movement that centers Jesus, a movement that explicitly follows his path of creative non-violence and his mission of compassion, mercy, and hope. Stephanie walked us through the commandments – that word again! – of the Civil Rights Movement. The first one is this: “Meditate daily on the teachings and life of Jesus.”

I don't know what we members of the Jesus Movement will feel called to do in the days ahead. Some of us dream of a mass mobilization and of non-violent resistance across all sectors of society, especially including labor, immigration, and climate. The day after clergy conference, I joined a hundred people carrying white roses who stood in the rain in front of Northampton's City Hall to honor the memory of Sophie Scholl and the “White Rose” movement in 1940's Germany. The movement's greatest legacy is its message of resistance to fascism with peaceful nonviolence and civil disobedience. I was moved to learn that the last thing that Sophie's mother said to her daughter before Sophie was executed was “Remember Jesus.”

This is my last sermon at St. John's for a while, and I am deeply grateful for this sojourn with you as a supply priest over the past five months. I'll be back before long to worship beside you in the pews, but I can't think of a better message to convey in my parting words than to encourage all of us to welcome the love of Jesus and to meditate daily on his life and teachings. Years ago, when I taught classes on prayer at Episcopal Divinity School, I would invite my students to pick something every day that they would do with Jesus, or for Jesus, or to Jesus. That's a practice that Mother Teresa of Calcutta taught her novices to do, and I think you'll find, as I have, that even the simplest and most ordinary of tasks, like making your bed or washing the dishes or walking down the street can light up with new meaning when you do it with Jesus, or for Jesus, or to Jesus. We come to realize that every moment matters. That every word matters. That every choice we make matters. That love can flow through us at every moment of our lives. And that we want every person we meet this day to be as sure of love as they are of sunlight.

<sup>1</sup> Heather Cox Richardson, “Letters from an American,” May 14, 2025, reflects on a New York Times op-ed about “competitive authoritarianism.”

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Cornel West is a theologian, political activist, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer Professor of Philosophy & Christian Practice at Union Theological Seminary. He says: “Justice is what love looks like in public, just like tenderness is what love feels like in private.” To get a sense of Dr. West's passionate commitment to justice, view his one-minute account on YouTube of his course on “Dietrich Bonhoeffer and James Baldwin.”

<sup>3</sup> Thank you, Bishop Doug Fisher, for this phrase.

<sup>4</sup> David Swift, “Martin Luther King's Ten Commandments for Non-Violence,” Buffalo Quakers.

*This sermon is posted at Rev. Margaret's website: <https://revivingcreation.org/the-jesus-movement/>*

## Financial Report for 2025

Overall, St. John's finances are in very good shape. Over the past three years the net worth of the parish has almost tripled. With the completion of the sale of the Heath property the Third Century Fund is now well over its goal of \$300,000. This year again, we have run a surplus of about \$10,000. One important piece of this is that we have been more successful in securing grants to support our programs (in particular "Love in a Backpack.") This is also due to higher-than-expected interest rates and lower personnel costs because we are using regular supply priests instead of a vicar. These last two factors will only hold in the short term.

I think this puts St. John's in a very creative place theologically. With the Third Century Fund and the past generosity of parishioners St. John has a very stable long-term financial future. And in the short term, we are also stable. This will allow us to take some risks in the medium term to figure how we can continue to do God's work here in Ashfield, and here in the world.

With Amy Murray's help we have implemented the processes Steve Hasbrouck set up to enable easier tracking of the complexities in St. John's finances because of both the increase in net worth and having part of our program budget funded by outside grants.

For completeness, I want to point out that the balances for the Trustees' Accounts reported here are as of 9/30/2025. The Trustees do not provide end-of-year balance information in a timely-enough manner to include in the Annual Report.

Special thanks to Jody Hall for stepping up as Assistant Treasurer and to Amy Murray for her invaluable work as Financial Administrator, and to the people and friends of St. John's for their continued generosity.

Respectfully submitted  
Raven Harris, Treasurer

## Notes on the budget

This budget here assumes we hire a vicar starting 1 July 2026. This assumption is for budgeting only to start moving our thinking to what we would need to do financially (and otherwise) to support a vicar. While we are working with the diocese to find a new vicar, it is still too early for anything more definitive.

The vicar's salary here is in the low-mid range according to diocesan guidelines. We have also increased the budget for the organist salary to match guidelines. This budget also includes a 3% raise for all other personnel.

This budget includes a deficit of about \$12,000. While I continue to be surprised by the generosity of the people and friends of St. John's, the funders of our grants, and the Holy Spirit I do think that we need to think about increasing our pledge and other income. And we have time to experiment and the capital to take risks.

Raven Harris, Treasurer

To make a donation, please scan this code. You can donate by credit card, debit card, or with a PayPal account. Thank you for your generous support.



## St. John's Fund Balances from 2025

<b>Fund</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Contributions</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Disbursements</b>	<b>Net Change</b>	<b>End</b>
Equipment	3,113.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,113.98
Vicar's Discretionary	1,893.83	4,059.35	0.00	3,711.00	348.35	2,242.18
Trustee Endowment	15,386.52	0.00	1,280.91	0.00	1,280.91	16,667.43
Third Century Fund	256,378.60	115,085.98	7,487.93	4,783.23	117,790.68	374,169.28
Music Organ Piano	13,470.99	10,510.56	0.00	0.00	10,510.56	23,981.55
Buildings and Grounds	2,343.02	8,544.34	0.00	10,856.36	(2,312.02)	31.00
Restricted Green Initiatives	24,155.24	0.00	0.00	24,155.24	(24,155.24)	0.00
History Projects	808.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	808.00
General Mission	7,695.40	3,500.00	0.00	1,864.75	1,635.25	9,330.65
Directory Profits	1,646.00	0.00	240.00	375.00	(135.00)	1,511.00
Liturgy Worship	856.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	856.49
Backpack Project	894.58	23,627.54	0.00	14,562.14	9,065.40	9,959.98
Ann Browning Poetry Series	300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	300.00
Mafe Dove	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00
Afghan Family	500.00	9,075.00	0.00	9,625.00	(550.00)	(50.00)
Ryan Scholarship	21,557.28	341.00	0.00	21,898.28	(21,557.28)	0.00
Unrestricted	140,143.45	4,978.75	0.00	19,295.19	(14,316.44)	154,756.21
Accumulated Surplus	42,396.29	82,239.54	29,096.43	97,552.52	13,783.45	27,250.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>534,139.67</b>	<b>261,962.06</b>	<b>38,105.27</b>	<b>208,678.71</b>	<b>91,388.62</b>	<b>625,528.29</b>

## St. John's Budgets for 2025 and 2026, Along With 2025 Actual

	<u>2025 Actual</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>	<u>2026 Budget</u>
	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 26</u>
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>			
<b>Income</b>			
<b>4009 · Pledges &amp; Givers of Record</b>			
4009231 - 2023 Pledge	580.00	1,380.00	
4009232 - 2023 Givers of Record			
4009233 - 2023 Additional Pledge			
4009241 - 2024 Pledge	4,340.00		
4009242 - 2024 Givers of Record			
4009243 - 2024 Additional Pledge			
4009251 - 2025 Pledge	66,865.00	67,470.00	2,200.00
4009252 - 2025 Givers of Record	8,933.00	7,000.00	
4009253 - 2025 Additional Pledge	570.00		
4009261 - 2026 Pledge			62,000.00
4009262 - 2026 Givers of Record			7,000.00
4009263 - 2026 Additional Pledge			
<b>Total 4009 · Pledges &amp; Givers of Record</b>	81,288.00	\$75,850.00	71,200.00
<b>4000 · Contributed Support</b>			
<b>4025 · Offerings</b>			
<b>4037 Special Offering/Mission</b>			
4037-1 Special offering- St. John Mission	10,175.00		
4037-2 Special offering -Outside Mission	366.00		
<b>4028 Christmas Offering</b>			
<b>4031 Easter Offering/Mission</b>			
<b>4029 Christmas Offering/Mission</b>			
4032 Easter/Good Friday	60.00		
4045 UTO		250.00	250.00
4033 Envelope			
4038 · Loose Plate	2,507.00	2,100.00	2,500.00
<b>Total 4025 · Offerings</b>	13,108.00	2,350.00	2,750.00
4055 · Flowers	730.00	700.00	700.00
4067 In Kind Donations	1,713.00		

	<u>2025 Actual</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>	<u>2026 Budget</u>
	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 26</u>
<b>4070 Gifts Unrestricted</b>	4,978.75	0.00	0.00
<b>4075 · Gifts-Restricted</b>			
<b>4077-4 Memorial Gifts</b>	30.00	0.00	0.00
<b>4079-3 · Ann Browning Poetry</b>		0.00	0.00
<b>4079-7 · Hedley Yost Organ Maint.</b>		0.00	0.00
<b>4079-81 · Gifts Restricted Other</b>		0.00	0.00
<b>4079-81 Gifts Restricted - operational</b>	<b>300</b>		
<b>4079-83 Gifts Restricted - outreach mission</b>	7,127.54		
<b>4075-7 · Restricted Grants</b>	20,000.00	5,000.00	10,000.00
<b>4077-1 - ER &amp; D</b>		0.00	0.00
<b>Total 4075 · Gifts-Restricted</b>	27,457.54	5,000.00	10,000.00
<b>4080 · Fred W. Wells Trust</b>	1,300.00	1,300.00	1,384.62
<b>4090 Diocesan Grants</b>			
<b>4100 · Vicars Discretionary Fund</b>	4,059.35	0.00	0.00
<b>Total 4000 · Contributed Support</b>	53,346.64	9,350.00	14,834.62
<b>4999 Unearned Income/uncashed checks</b>	149.70		
<b>5000 · Earned Revenue</b>			
<b>5031 · Lease Income</b>	12,000.00	12,000.00	12,000.00
<b>5020 · Diocesan Trust Income</b>	673.46	600.00	600.00
<b>5030 · Facility Usage Fees</b>	865.00	800.00	800.00
<b>5310 · Interest Income</b>			
<b>5310-1 Bank Interest</b>	608.39		
<b>5310-2 Investment Income</b>	10,142.83		
<b>Total 5310 Interest</b>	10,751.22	12,000.00	9,500.00
<b>Total 5000 · Earned Revenue</b>	24,289.68	25,400.00	22,900.00
<b>5700 · Fundraising Income</b>			
<b>5708 · Picnic Donations</b>	200.00		
<b>5700 · Fundraising Income - Other</b>	10.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total 5700 · Fundraising Income</b>	210.00	0.00	0.00
<b>5800 · Special Events/Mission</b>			
<b>5800 · Special Events (F.Fest, Xmas, tagsale)</b>			
<b>5814 · Revenue</b>	7,654.85	7,000.00	7,000.00

	<u>2025 Actual</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>	<u>2026 Budget</u>
	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 26</u>
5815 · Expense	-2,757.80	-3,000.00	-3,000.00
Total 5810 · Special Events	4,897.05	4,000.00	4,000.00
Total 5800 · Special Events/Mission	4,897.05	4,000.00	4,000.00
Total Income	164,181.07	114,600.00	\$112,934.62
Expense			
7000 · Outreach			
7020 · Mission	5,700.00	7,000.00	6,000.00
7030 · Mission Other			
703004 · Community Picnic	494.59	250.00	250.00
703008 · Other	759.25		
703016 Food Bank W. Mass			
703018 · UTO	69.18	250.00	250.00
70310 - Mafi Dove			
703021 Christmas Offering/Mission			
703023 Special Offering/Mission			
7030231 Spec. Off/Miss. St. John's Mission	11,420.00		
7030232 Spec. Off/Miss. Outside Mission	21,898.28		
703022 Easter Offering/Mission			
703025 Grant Expenses			
703026 SPIN Expenses	1,230.50	1,200.00	1,200.00
703031 Backpack Expenses	9,085.75	5,000.00	5,500.00
7034 · Discretionary expenses	3,709.00		
703020 ER&D			
703003 · Integrity		100.00	
703024 new mission			
Total 7030 · Mission Other	48,666.55	6,800.00	7,200.00
Total 7000 · Outreach	54,366.55	13,800.00	13,200.00
7010 · Assessment for Common Ministry	10,337.00	10,337.00	11,047.00
7080 · Memorial & Special Project Fund			
7081-1 200th Anniversary Expenses			
7082 · Ann Browning Poetry			
7086 Other		0.00	0.00
Total 7080 · Memorial & Special Project Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00

	<u>2025 Actual</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>	<u>2026 Budget</u>
	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 26</u>
<b>7500 · Worship, Education, Pastoral</b>			
7501 · Adult Education	360.47	100.00	100.00
7502 · Liturgical Supplies	491.08	700.00	500.00
7504 · Clergy Education		100.00	100.00
75045 · Diocesan Clergy Events/Retreats		100.00	100.00
7505 · Flowers	798.10	1,200.00	800.00
7506 · Vestry Retreats		65.00	65.00
7507 · Children & Youth Prog.		100.00	100.00
7508 · Music	269.00	500.00	300.00
7509-Publications/Books	146.25	250.00	100.00
7510 · Pastoral Care	137.20	200.00	200.00
7511 · Hospitality	582.53	600.00	600.00
7512 · Safe Church Fee	75.00	150.00	150.00
7513 - Vicar's Expenses		500.00	500.00
7514 Vicar's Mileage		500.00	500.00
7515 Team Meetings		50.00	50.00
7516 Lay Leadership			
7517 Liturgical Resources	169.89	100.00	170.00
7518 Dioscesan Lay Events	200.00	150.00	200.00
<b>Total 7500 · Worship, Education, Pastoral</b>	<u>3,229.52</u>	<u>5,365.00</u>	<u>4,535.00</u>
<b>8000 · Personnel</b>			
8015 · Cleaning ("Sexton")			
8018 Sexton Payroll Tax Expense	139.77	208.85	208.85
8016 Sexton Payroll	<u>2,097.00</u>	<u>2,730.00</u>	<u>2,817.10</u>
<b>Total 8015 Cleaning ("Sexton")</b>	<u>2,236.77</u>	<u>2,938.85</u>	<u>3,025.95</u>
8020 · Vicar Salary			
8024 · Vicar Salary	406.85	16,263.00	10,842.00
8023 · Pension	341.62	3,138.76	2,092.51
80241 · Vicar Social Security	31.13	1,244.12	829.41
80242 · Workers Compensation Ins.	<u>100.00</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>100.00</u>
80243 - Sabbatical Fund			
<b>Total 8020 · Vicar Salary</b>	879.60	20,745.88	13,863.92
8025 · Supply Clergy			
8026 · Supply Travel	791.20	400.00	400.00
8027 · Clergy Fees	<u>11,353.40</u>	<u>1,250.00</u>	<u>7,500.00</u>

	<u>2025 Actual</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>	<u>2026 Budget</u>
	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 26</u>
<b>Total 8025 · Supply Clergy</b>	12,144.60	1,650.00	7,900.00
<b>8030 · Organist &amp; Music</b>			
8032 · Organist Wage	7,640.96	9,220.32	11,400.00
8036 Choral Director	3,203.98	3,204.00	3,300.00
8033 · Payroll Tax Expense Organist/ChoirDir	814.44	950.46	1,124.55
80242 · Workers Compensation Ins.	118.00	77.00	120.00
8032 · Organist Subcontractor	200.00		
<b>Total 8030 · Organist</b>	11,977.38	13,451.78	15,944.55
<b>8040 · Payroll Expense/Office Staff</b>			
8070 · Financial Administrator	5,159.96	5,160.00	5,314.80
8050 · Parish Administrator	15,460.00	15,990.00	16,469.70
8080 Program Coordinator	4,855.00	3,900.00	4,017.00
8041 · Payroll Tax Expense	1,948.75	1,916.33	1,973.81
8042 · Workers Comp Insurance	103.00	62.00	62.00
<b>Total 8040 · Payroll Expense/Office Staff</b>	27,526.71	27,028.33	27,837.31
<b>Total 8000 · Personnel</b>	54,765.06	65,814.84	68,571.73
<b>8500 · Administrative</b>			
8501 Uncollected Pledges	4,920.00	1,380.00	
8510 Bank Fees	4.00		
8520 · Bulletins and Printing	501.24	1,000.00	600.00
8523 · Family Ministry	84.97	120.00	
8530 · Offering Envelopes	84.94	180.00	90.00
8540 · Office Supplies	1,753.16	2,000.00	2,000.00
8545 Online Services (newsletters etc)	285.71		170.00
8550 · Postage	313.67	500.00	350.00
8555 Fundraising Expense			
8580 Internet and Phone Service	2,104.34	2,300.00	1,836.00
8585 - Website expense	253.94	120.00	46.00
8560-Professional Services			0.00
8590 Other	5,024.97	350.00	250.00
<b>Total 8500 - Administrative</b>	15,330.94	7,950.00	5,342.00
<b>9000 · Facilities/Utilities</b>			

	<u>2025 Actual</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>	<u>2026 Budget</u>
	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 26</u>
9010 · Blanket Insurance/Property	4,271.00	4,271.00	4,444.00
9025 Grounds Maintenance	115.06		
9030 · Church			
9031 · Church Electric	1,328.99	1,300.00	1,400.00
9032 · Church propane	2,581.08	2,500.00	2,600.00
9033 · Church Wastewater Fees	977.00	800.00	1,000.00
9034 · Church Water	435.00	300.00	450.00
9034-01 · Water District Tax			
9035 · Organ Maintenance		100.00	100.00
9035-1 Piano Maintenance			
9036 · Repair & Maintenance			
9036-1 · Furnace/Cleaning		250.00	250.00
9036-2 · Lawnmowing	1,192.50	1,300.00	1,300.00
9036-3 · Snow Removal		0.00	0.00
9037 · Services	1,166.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
9038 · Materials	233.44	1,000.00	500.00
<b>Total 9036 · Repair &amp; Maintenance</b>	<u>2,591.94</u>	<u>4,050.00</u>	<u>3,550.00</u>
<b>Total 9030 · Church</b>	7,914.01 #	9,050.00	9,100.00
9040 · Corner			
9041 · Corner Electric	2,356.72	1,000.00	1,200.00
9042 · Corner Propane	3,508.82	3,000.00	3,500.00
9043 · Corner Wastewater Fees	1,306.00	1,300.00	1,300.00
9044 · Corner Water	798.00	325.00	325.00
9044-1 · Water District Tax			
Real Estate Tx	321.07	384.00	350.00
9049 Equipment Purchase	52.26	300.00	100.00
9045 · Repair & Maintenance			
9045-1 · Furnace Cleaning		225.00	225.00
9045-2 · Lawnmowing	1,192.50	1,300.00	1,300.00
9045-3 · Snow Removal	430.00	600.00	600.00
9046 · Services	2,284.42	300.00	300.00
9047 · Materials	303.05	300.00	300.00
<b>Total 9045 · Repair &amp; Maintenance</b>	<u>4,209.97</u>	<u>2,725.00</u>	<u>2,725.00</u>
<b>Total 9040 · Corner</b>	<u>12,552.84</u>	<u>9,034.00</u>	<u>9,500.00</u>

	<u>2025 Actual</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>	<u>2026 Budget</u>
	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 25</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 26</u>
<b>Total 9000 · Facilities/Utilities</b>	<u>24,852.91</u>	<u>22,355.00</u>	<u>23,044.00</u>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<u>162,881.98</u>	<u>125,621.84</u>	<u>125,739.73</u>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<u>1,299.09</u>	<u>-11,021.84</u>	<u>-12,805.11</u>
<b>Other Income/Expense</b>			
<b>Other Income</b>			
<b>9150 From Other Fund</b>	18,795.19		
<b>9100- Endowment Income</b>			
<b>9100-01 Increase/Decrease in value</b>	7,487.93		
<b>9100-02 Donations (TCF)</b>	<u>6,500.00</u>		
<b>Total 9100 Securities (Vanguard)</b>	13,987.93		
<b>9200 Bequests</b>	<u>108,625.69</u>		
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<u>141,408.81</u>		
<b>Other Expense</b>			
<b>9160 To Other Fund</b>	18,795.19		
<b>9060 - Capital Projects</b>			
<b>Total 9060 · Capital Projects</b>	<u>32,205.00</u>		
<b>9310 Non-Operational Fund Expense</b>	<u>500.00</u>		
<b>Total Other Expense</b>	<u>51,500.19</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<u>89,908.62</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<u><u>91,207.71</u></u>	<u><u>-11,021.84</u></u>	<u><u>-12,805.11</u></u>

*A Prayer from A New Zealand Prayer Book*

Draw your Church together, O God, into one great  
company of disciples, together following our Lord  
Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together  
serving him in his mission to the world, and  
together witnessing to his love on every continent  
and island.

