# ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

101 Chapel St. Portsmouth, NH 03801 603-436-8283 www.stjohnsnh.org Dear St. John's,

The New Year has begun. We have much to be grateful for in our corner of the Kingdom of God. The material realities of buildings and budgets are well in hand and ongoing work is always a given. The past few years have been very positive. We have had balanced budgets (at the beginning of the year AND at the end!) That is wonderful but it only points to the real reason we are a community. I have witnessed God at work in people's lives in truly inspiring ways this past year. New ways to express and share God's love have emerged and blossomed with the Choir School at St. John's leading the way.

Pondering God's grace I simply invite you to take a breath and remember a time this past year when God was undeniably present. I have a small picture that hangs in my house given to me by a friend when I was ordained. It states, "Bidden or not, God is present." This saying reminds me that God is ALWAYS present. It is just up to me to live a life that cultivates awareness of this reality. Vestry meetings, church services, funeral receptions, common table lunches, Kids Church, baptisms, staff meetings, counseling sessions, driving the Choir School van are a few of the places and practices that remind me of God's continuing presence. What are your places and practices that remind you of God's presence?

Church is a "get-to" not a "have-to" is one of my mottos. God's presence is everywhere and St. John's community helps me to remember that daily. This gift is at the heart of my gratitude. Being a part of God's community at St. John's has given me more than I can ever fully express. How will we, this year, share this gift with our wider community? How will we continue to seek God in all people and situations? How will we live into the grace that God freely gives? These questions propel me into action. At St. John's we have what many call, "an embarrassment of riches." I believe this to be true and the words of scripture ring in my ears as a response, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required;" The question I hear for me and for our community is, "What will we do with the abundance we have been given?"

The deep good news that I see is that we are a community that is listening. We are listening to each other and listening to God. Please pray with me for hearts that feel, ears that hear, eyes that see. But let's not stop with awareness. The African proverb that Anne taught me is ringing in my ears "When you pray. Move you feet!" 2016 beckons and I believe we are up to the task. May God's presence light your way on your journey.

Blessings, Light and Love

Faithfully, your rector,

# CLERK'S REPORT ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES January 25, 2015

# **Vestry Members:**

Present: Peter Tarlton, Jeanne Lincoln, Marian Ellis, Anna Kay Vorsteg, Ann Schwartzwalder, Kathryn

Saunders, Lee Baxter

Excused: Randy Cary, Tim Platt, Dani Megliola, Lara Ludes

Clergy: Rev. Robert Steven, Rev. Anne Williamson

Call to Order: 9:04

# Request for the approval of minutes from the Annual Meeting 2014:

Motion: Brad Lown 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rick Miller

Introduction of Vestry Slate: Members: Chris Sieve, Suzi Raeside, John Tabor

**Motion to accept slate:** Peter Tarlton; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lew Roberts

Anna Kay Vorsteg: Our work is to fulfill God's dream in our creation, but when the numbers are

healthy and the news is good that enables our work

Financial Report: Kathryn Saunders & Lee Baxter

Kathryn:

- 2014 Year End Fiscal Performance: In the black + ended year revenue in excess of 27,000; within 1% of pledge fulfillment; 80% comes from pledge
- Our money goes to important things and staff makes sure of this: music, children, adults – vitality of programs
- 2015 Budget: BIG NEWS above pledge goal (thanks to canvassers and generosity and commitment of community) Our treasure is where our hearts are
- Planning a draw of less than 4% next year want to maintain the value of the asset (ad grow, hopefully)
- Balanced budget

#### Lee:

- Tebbetts gift 118,361 (\$65,000 from bequest); much good work came from the funds please visit and see the good work done from the gift
- Endowment 1,576,149 capital improvement
- Thanks to the finance committee for management & Margaret
- Living within our means

# **Question:**

Margaret Sofio: Why is the Outreach number lower?

Anna Kay: Philosophical shift: We would like to do specific asks for projects and the \$\$ in the budget is our commitment to the MDG

We definitely want to do outreach, but now we'd like to decide on initiatives and then come to the community to see \$\$ and support for that call. The hope is that it will increase an interest in activity around outreach.

# **Annual Campaign Update:**

Ann Schwartzwalder:

- Canvassers thanks for them and John Tabor as the leader and Pat Baker (also instrumental); Chris Kozak (video)
- Naming of canvassers THANK YOU!
- 2 -Angels who offered \$15,000 challenge and match

#### Suzi Raeside:

- Shared her experience with congregation:
  - Hesitant at first; more about conversation about SJC and why we love it here.
  - Conversations are not about money.
  - She encourages others to give it a try and don't be scared away by money talk.

# **Buildings & Grounds Update:**

Anna Kay:

- Work on hardscape is an area of need, poised to take action
- Have done much ongoing maintenance THANKS ANDY! Brings heart and care to his work

Peter Tarlton: Description of improvements planned over the next several years

- Church 200+
- Parish Hall 60+
- Defining long term program to preserve what we have
  - Vestry has asked for an assessment thorough review of structures and systems
  - Guide us in sequence and fundraising
  - Rob, Vestry, Art Parrott, Gerry, Randy, Doug Green meeting as a sub-committee
     any others welcome
  - o 1<sup>st</sup> review last Tuesday
  - Early highlights –roof going to need replacement, morter pointing, retaining wall project should be combined with a parking lot stabilization effort, lighting, connector between parish hall and church – lots of ideas, earlyl stages
  - Will meet monthly for next 3 months
  - Parishioners contributed 80% of 25,000 effort. If anyone would like to give 5,000 that would be much appreciated (prayer also helpful)
- Anna Kay: Some of the news is better, but some is scary; Responsibility has its cost
- Could preliminary report (summary ) on the website?

- Peter thinks that is premature, but we will give updates. Need refinement.
- Anna Kay: The goal is for everyone to be in the know. Please look at specific updates in report

# **Questions/Comments:**

Ann Tarlton: Thank you all! **Thank yous**: Anna Kay

# Vestry:

- action oriented
- thanks community for trusting and joining us on action committees

# Staff:

- no way is the compensation line representative of human and heart effort (fully staffed and fully committed)
- added hours to Joanne & Lory paying dividends through stewardship efforts & hard work with numbers

# Charlie (and Christine):

helping us move forward

# Dick Siener,

# Former Vestry members who keep coming, committees, initiatives

#### Rob

- for his leadership style
- family/committee moving to do the work of God.
- Letting go...
- putting forth questions that allow us to wrestle answers.
- Thanks for his fauth in us as a committee in shared decision making

# Thoughts from the Rector:

- Thanks, Anna Kay
- A blast to be rector, thankful every day
- We will make mistakes, but grace has entered the room none of us is perfect, but we
  will work on it as we give God our very best
- "Rotating off" Peter Tarlton, Tim Platt, Marian Ellis (appointed as Clerk), Laura Ludes (made Tebbetts house happen), Dani Megliola
- Thanks to Anna Kay & Anne for their deep friendship

# Final thoughts from the Senior Warden:

- Temptation is to stop in the face of good news,
- leave with challenge/invitation:
  - o think about how far our light can radiate and how far it can go.

- Broaden our touch in the community;
- What are acts of faith that we can turn into real improvements in the community and increase in our health
- Our relationship is not fiscal but of faith –
- Call to action:
  - What will we do a year from now?

Closing prayer: 10:01 Adjournment: 10:02

Respectfully Submitted,

Marian Ellis Clerk

# SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

2015 - Grace Given

Romans 12:6-8. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering, the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Yes, we have so many rich and varied gifts: the choir member, in rejoicing; the commontabler, in nurturing; the tutor, in patience; the architect, in vision; the canvasser, in courage; the parishioner, in belonging. And fortunate for us all, the list goes on. What abundant grace!

From the privileged vantage point of senior warden, I would have to say 2015 was a year when we, St. John's, exercised more fully the grace given us. So many shared their Godgiven gifts and bettered the lives of others in direct and indirect ways. And I sense, we as a community are healthier and happier for it. We again grew in numbers; welcoming more to worship, adding programs, serving and supporting more, renovating and enhancing the value of some of our physical spaces, and all while operating well within our fiscal resources. In worldly terms, we had a strong performance and ended the year with a positive variance. We accomplished a great many things and are now poised to do even more.

So many of you gave so much to bring live and love to all of our ministries. While I cannot begin to name all of our grace giving, I can and need to say thank you to you and to our dedicated clergy and staff. We should all be proud to be a members of an action oriented, faith driven community.

I think it is important to highlight a few pieces of work that were unique to this year, projects (and people) that will have long lasting positive impact on our life at St. John's:

- Under the guidance of Gerry Simpkins, Randy Carey, Laura Ludes and others, we
  renovated our bathrooms and class/meeting spaces in the parish hall, making
  some long overdue upgrades to enhance function, aesthetics and safety. Most of
  the renovation costs were covered through the legacy gift made by Margaret
  Tebbetts. We remain grateful for Margaret's generosity and vision.
- Perhaps our most daring project was the launch of the St. John's Choir School. It all began when Meg Harper shared her program vision with the Vestry on the heels of our February retreat, where we had discussed how we might build on St. John's acknowledged strengths in the areas of music and feeding to serve more in our Portsmouth Community. Meg, Ashely, our clergy, staff and Vestry were quickly at work, and, so was and is, the Holy Spirit. In September we welcomed the first cherubs into the pilot program. We are grateful to all who have made an investment to support these deserving students. Many have helped to secure funding, and a patient few have even stepped up to provide tutoring and other support. It was a bold move that has lifted voices, spirits and grades for a previously underserved group from our community.
- Thanks to the unwavering initiative of Peter Tarlton, and the design skills of Doug Greene, we, with the quiet but significant fiscal contributions of a few, were able to hire an outside consultant to assess the state of our property and structures. This resulted in a comprehensive plan that identifies, prioritizes and prices capital improvements needs. After looking under and over everything, it is clear that the most pressing need before us is to improve our hardscape; meaning our parking lots, sidewalks and retaining walls. (Perhaps you too have noted the need!) We plan to act on hardscape capital improvements needs this summer. Visioning for future projects is underway. Please stay tuned.

I have heard it said that grace is the spirit of God operating in humans. It was a remarkable year in the life of St John's, a year full of grace, were mere mortals took good action. We should celebrate and give thanks for all that we have been in a position to receive, and for all that we have been in a position to give.

We are a beloved bunch with gifts that differ according to grace given. What shall we do next with our shared abundance? The Romans accomplished a few things in their day. What might we do, with grace, in ours?

Onward! Upward!

Anna Kay Vorsteg

# TREASURER'S REPORT

# Treasurer's Report

#### 2015 REVENUE and EXPENSES

We are happy to report that St. John's 2015 year ended with Revenues in excess of Expenses by \$32,467.

#### **REVENUE SUMMARY**

2015 revenue totaled \$746,286, about \$5,400 more than budgeted, about \$75,000 more than 2014 and about \$135,000 more than 2013. Consistent with prior years, about 80% of our income was from offerings: Pledge, Plate and other gifts.

In addition to increases in pledges and other gifts, income from donations for parking lot use increased substantially year over year, from about \$41,000 in 2014 to about \$70,000 in 2015. This was primarily driven by renegotiation of the lease for the lower lot.

The amount of Endowment Draw actually used was less than the amount authorized and withdrawn. A little over \$5,000 will be re-deposited to Endowment accounts.

Total pledge fulfillment EXCEEDED the final total of actual pledge commitments.

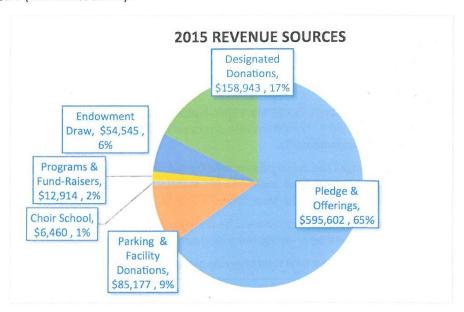
2015 Operating Revenue	Actual
2015 Pledge Offerings	\$ 516,985
2014 Pledge Offerings Received in 2015	\$ 5,152
Other Offerings (Plate and Special)	\$ 66,779
Choir School (Payroll Subsidy Contributions)	\$ 6,460
Parking & Facilities Use Donations	\$ 85,177
Programs & Fund-Raisers	\$ 11,128
Checking/Savings Interest	\$ 60
Authorized Endowment Draw for Operations: Actual \$ Used	\$ 54,545
2015 Operating Revenue Total	\$746,286

Total dollars coming into St. John's in 2015 also included "Temporary Restricted" funds, received (and subsequently paid out) to support designated purposes, not included in Operating Accounts.

2015 Designated ("In-and-Out") Revenue	Actual
Donations* (Common Table, Concerts, Choir School, YOC, special Outreach collections)	\$ 158,943
Program Donations (Retreats)	\$ 8,471
2015 Designated Revenue Total	\$167,414

<sup>\*</sup> Note on Donations: The Vestry was pleased to be able to transfer \$5,000 from Operating Funds (included in the donations listed above as "seed money" for the Choir School. All other donations listed above are from other sources.

#### All income (both tables above):



#### **OPERATING EXPENSE SUMMARY**

2015 expenses totaled \$ 713,819, approximately \$15,500 less than budgeted. Our largest category of expense is people: Clergy and Lay staff. Spending in the Lay category was higher than budget in part due to payroll for Choir School which was offset by Choir School funds transfer and also due to a budgeting error. The error was offset by Building and Grounds spending less than budget, primarily due to continued focus on major capital improvements, this year in Thaxter Hall with the bathroom and classroom upgrades, using money from the bequest of Margaret Tebbetts.

We continued working with the Auditors in 2015 with further review of our books and accounting practices as the final step with them toward preparation for a full audit in 2016. Total expense for these services was less than budgeted due to positive results.

Operating Expenses, viewed in summary through the lens of our accounting system, and its Chart of Accounts:

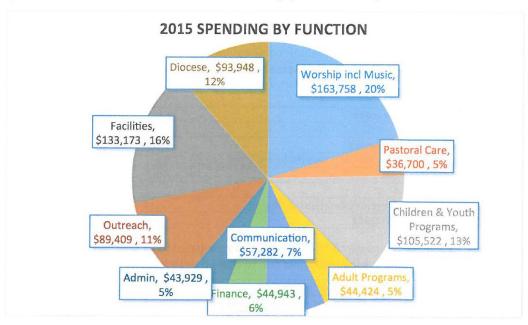
5 Operating Expenses	2015 Actual	
Diocesan Pledge	\$ 93,948	
Personnel		
Clergy Payroll, Benefits & Other Expense	\$ 229,869	
Lay Payroll, Benefits & Other Expense	\$ 218,909	
Total Personnel	\$448,778	
Buildings and Grounds		
Utilities	\$ 30,844	
Maintenance & Supplies	\$ 54,039	
Operating contribution to Facility Assessment	\$ 5,455	
Total Buildings and Grounds	\$ 90,338	
Administrative/Office	\$ 32,183	
Programs		
Education		
Adult Education	\$ 778	
Children Education	\$ 5,472	
Youth Education	\$ 2,312	
Other Programs (Receptions, Hospitality)	\$ 1,444	

2015 Operating Expenses	2015 Actual
Total Programs	\$10,005
Outreach (Projects, Discretionary, Millennium Development)	\$ 3,500
Music	\$ 21,054
Worship (Altar, Sanctuary, Liturgy)	\$ 825
Insurance	\$ 12,953
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ 236
otal 2015 Operating Expenses	\$ 713,819

As described above for Revenue, Total dollars paid through St. John's also included "Temporary Restricted" funds, (received for) and paid out to support designated purposes.

2015 Designated ("In-and-Out") Expenses	2015 Actual	
Choir School	\$ 11,076	
Clergy Discretionary	\$ 9,284	
Common Table	\$ 38,460	
Outreach	\$ 2,960	
Retreats & Trips	\$ 8,906	
Young Organist Collective	\$ 15,228	
Special Music Funds	\$ 11,124	
Facility Special Projects	\$ 26,364	
2015 Designated Expenses	\$123,402	

Total Operational and Designated 2015 Expenses, viewed <u>functionally</u> (dollars paid out plus 'people costs' allocated to the activities where they spend their time):



# **ENDOWMENT (Long-Term Investment Funds)**

Our endowment now stands at \$1,387,368. The balance will increase slightly upon re-deposit (in 2016) of \$5,545 of unused 2015 Endowment Draw.

In addition to the authorized withdrawal for operations, the bequest from Margaret Tebbetts continued to be used as intended by the donor and as authorized in 2013 by the Vestry to fund

capital improvements to our properties. The Tebbetts bequest supported the complete renovation of our house at 100 Chapel in 2014 to create office space in what is now named the Tebbetts House. In 2015 the balance of the Tebbetts funds enabled major renovations to the parish hall, with a primary goal of improving bathrooms and class/meeting spaces.

Endowment Values Last 5 Years					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Starting Balance	\$ 1,239,239	\$ 1,187,290	\$ 1,312,586	\$ 1,623,651	\$ 1,576,149
Growth	\$5,051	\$ 155,295	\$ 159,158	\$ 78,888	\$ (41,076)
Withdrawals: Operating	\$ (57,000)	\$ (30,000)	\$ (51,250)	\$ (62,390)	\$ (60,000)*
Withdrawals: Tebbetts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (65,000)	\$ (121,000)
Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 17,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 20,000
Tebbetts Gift	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 186,157	\$-	\$-
Ending Balance	\$ 1,187,290	\$ 1,312,586	\$ 1,623, 651	\$ 1,576,149	\$ 1,387,368

<sup>\*</sup> Note on 2015 Withdrawals Operating: Only \$54,455 was used. Balance to be re-deposited.

We are pleased that after our annual draws of the past few operating years, the fund has continued to grow enough to cover our allotted annual use, and as you will note, is above the value before the influx of temporary funds from the Tebbetts gift.

We would like to recognize that the work of our Investment Committee: John Hebert, Sandra Pagel, and Gerry Simpkins is highly valued and appreciated.

#### **2016 OPERATING BUDGET**

The Vestry is very pleased to report that the 2016 budget is again balanced and includes funds for new initiatives including the "Seacoast Youth" Curate position (partly funded by St. Andrews and the Diocese).

The expense budget includes a full staff to support programs, care and outreach, provides a 3% increase for both clergy and lay staff, increases our contribution to the work of the Episcopal Church in NH, and maintains funding for facility upkeep and repairs to address urgent needs.

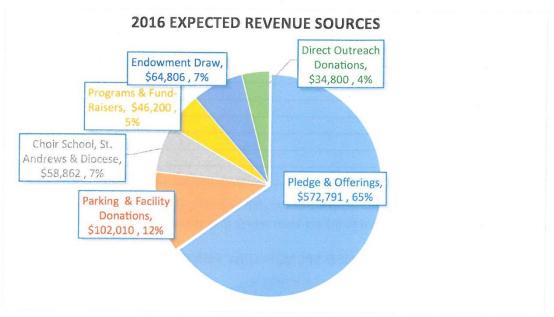
#### **OPERATING REVENUE BUDGET**

2016 Operating Budget: Revenue	2016 Budget
Pledge Offerings	\$ 510,000
Other Offerings (Plate and Special)	\$ 58,291
Choir School, St. Andrews & Diocese (Payroll Subsidy Contributions)	\$ 58,862
Parking & Facility Donations	\$ 102,010
Programs & Fund-Raisers	\$ 9,500
Authorized Endowment Draw for Operations (4.5%)	\$ 64,806
TOTAL 2016 OPERATING BUDGET	\$803,469

As in prior years, total dollars coming into St. John's are also anticipated to include "Temporary Restricted" funds, received (and subsequently paid out) to support designated purposes.

2016 Estimated Designated ("In-and-Out") Revenue	2016 Estimate
Donations (i.e. Common Table, special Outreach collections)	\$ 120,500
Program Donations (Retreats)	\$ 7,500
2016 Designated Revenue Estimate	\$128,000

Total Operational and Designated 2016 revenue, by source:



# **2016 OPERATING EXPENSE BUDGET**

Viewed in summary through the lens of our accounting system, and its Chart of Accounts:

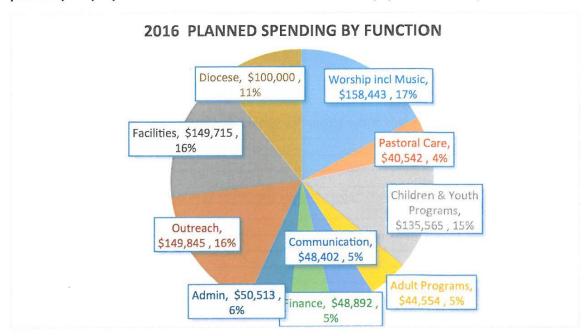
2016 Operating Budget: Expenses	2016 Budget
Diocesan Pledge	\$ 100,000
Personnel	
Clergy Payroll, Benefits & Other Expense (incl. Curate before offset by subsidies)	\$ 290,866
Lay Payroll, Benefits & Other Expense	\$ 216,555
Total Personnel	\$507,421
Buildings and Grounds	
Utilities	\$ 33,292
Maintenance & Supplies	\$ 68,491
Total Buildings and Grounds	\$101,783
Administrative/Office	\$ 35,610
Programs	
Education	
Adult Education	\$1,000
Children Education	\$ 8,300
Youth Education	\$ 2,000
Other Programs (Receptions, Hospitality)	\$ 2,000
Total Programs	\$ 13,300
Outreach (Projects, Discretionary, Millennium Development)	\$ 5,700
Music	\$ 22,000
Worship (Altar, Sanctuary, Liturgy)	\$ 2,000
Insurance	\$ 15,255
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ 400
Total 2016 Expense Budget	\$ 803,469

Complete line item detail of the 2016 Operating Budget is available as an addendum to this report and is posted on the parish website: <a href="www.stjohnsnh.org">www.stjohnsnh.org</a> in the Archives section.

As described above for Revenue, Total dollars expected to be paid through St. John's also included "Temporary Restricted" funds, (received for) and paid out to support designated purposes.

2016 Designated ("In-and-Out") Estimated Expenses	2016 Estimate	
Choir School	\$ 50,000	
Clergy Discretionary	\$ 11,000	
Common Table	\$ 25,000	
Outreach	\$ 3,000	
Retreats & Trips	\$ 7,500	
Young Organist Collective	\$ 15,000	
Special Music Funds	\$ 11,500	
Facility Special Projects	\$ 0	
2016 Designated Expenses	\$123,000	

Total 2016 Budgeted Operational and Expected Designated Expenses, viewed <u>functionally</u> (dollars paid out plus 'people costs' allocated to the activities where they spend their time):



In summary, 2015 was \*another\* good year 'in the black'; 2016 has a balanced budget and exciting plans.

Submitted with gratitude for being part of the St. John's community, *Kelly Boston & Kathryn Saunders*, Co-Treasurers

On a personal note, I would like to thank the St. John's community for the opportunity to serve as Treasurer for the past three years. It has been a challenge and a joy. *Kathryn* 

# JR. WARDEN PROJECTS REPORT

<u>Projects</u>	Status Date Completed	Est. Cost	Final Cost
Remodel bathrooms to comply with A.D.A. requirements	Completed Oct 2015		\$76,000
2. Upgrade Lighting and Paint classrooms and choir Room, install shelves and New hot water heater, Move office and Classroom doors	Completed Sep 2015		\$51,000
3. Expand office in Thaxter  Hall for multipurpose room	Completed Sep 2015		\$18,000
4. Take storage closet at  Entryway and move doors into Thaxter hall for Jr Choir robes and tableclothes	Completed Dec 2015 Added to this project was more shelving in the choir room and a locking closet in the new office in Thaxter Hall	\$1,895.00	\$3,802.00
5. Move light switch and install more outlets in economy shop and lighting and outlets in hall outside of economy shop	Waiting on start date from contractor	\$1,200.00	
6. Foundation work in basement of church on south side wall	Completed Jan 2016	\$6,300.00	\$6,300.00
7. stage ceiling, replace insulation and install wallboard and update lighting	Unfunded at this time	\$7,500.00	
8. Ceiling and lighting and insulation in Thaxer hall	Unfunded at this time	\$44,000.00	
9. Ceiling and lighting and update kitchen in Philbrick room	Unfunded at this time	\$14,915	

10. Install motion senor devices in bathrooms	Waiting on start date	\$290.00
11. Complete counters in Kitchen, stainless steel Tops to remaining counters	Waiting on quote	
12. Install storm windows(4) For windows in new Office and two in Hall	Working on pricing	
13. Inspect/maintain fire Extinguishers.	Annual	\$375.00
14. Cleaning of carpets	Annual	\$450.00
15. Inspect/test fire alarm system	Annual	\$345.00
16. Snow removal	Seasonal	\$6,000
17. Lawn care	Seasonal	\$500.00
18. Window Cleaning	Annual	\$600.00

# ASSOCIATE RECTOR'S REPORT

# NeighborCare, the St. John's Pastoral Care provision

Pastoral Care is at the heart of a loving community, and there are many folks at St. John's who give sacrificially of their time to this ministry. A big thank you to Jane Holway, Linda McVay, Clark McCurdy, Charlie Nichols, Aubrey Sanderson, Mary Turner and Conni White for their contributions to the Pastoral Team as Eucharistic Visitors, and I am grateful to all who have organized and provided support for both parishioners and members of the community in times of challenge and crisis.

The provision of Pastoral Care at St. John's continues to evolve. In 2014, an expanded pastoral care program, NeighborCare, was launched. In its initial phase, NeighborCare is working in and through the St. John's Community.

We have 25 people signed up on the NeighborCare data base, as both givers and receivers of NeighborCare but there have been more than 25 people who have provided NeighborCare or received NeighborCare this past year! Thank you to all who have provided lifts to and from church, doctors' appointments (as far away as Hanover!), physical therapy and the grocery store, visited the housebound, residents of nursing homes and patients in the hospital and rehab, plowed and shoveled during the Big Winter, and cooked and delivered meals to numerous parishioners and other members of our community this past year. Each such action is evidence of the love of Christ and I am so grateful for the generosity of spirit and the gift of time given to those in our community who have a temporary or long-term need of support.

Anne Williamson

# **Adult Formation**

Adult Forum (Sunday mornings 9-9:45), BibleWorkbench (now Tuesday mornings from 10:30-12:00) and St. John's Night (Wednesday Evenings 6-8:00) have continued throughout 2015.

We concluded 'The Year of the Bible' and began 'The Year of Pilgrimage' in autumn 2015. On Sunday mornings Gospel Chat is offered in the Adult Forum slot between the services — an opportunity to read and discuss the Gospel for the following week. On Tuesday mornings, a group of 8-10 people meets to discuss one of the readings for the following Sunday using the *BibleWorkbench* resource, followed by Midday Prayer. Wednesday evening's *St. John's Night* participants read *The Story* and are now reading *We Make the Road by Walking* together, with a light supper from 6-6:30, study from

6:30-7:45 followed by Compline (Night Prayer). In 2015, we had over 50 attendees, with a regular group of 10-15 each week.

Enormous thanks to Charlie Nichols, Dick Siener and Ann Tarlton for sharing the leadership of the three groups over the year and to all those who provided supper on Wednesday evenings.

In addition to the regular formation offerings, a variety of other formation opportunities were offered including a Lent series by the Society of St. John the Evangelist entitled *It's time to... Stop, Pray, Work, Play & Love* – many thanks to Ann Tarlton and Charlie Nichols for co-leading that offering (and to Charlie for handling the technical piece!); and a Lenten quiet day – many thanks to Rob Stevens and Ann Tarlton for co-leading the quiet day. Also during Lent, there was a Holy Week book discussion on Atul Gawande's book *Being Mortal*. Many thanks to Lizzie Bristow for co-leading that discussion.

Later in the year, Kimberley and Chloe Green lead a five week book group on White Privilege and Racism, and Dr. Eden Wales Freedman lead a discussion on the life and works of Flannery O'Connor.

The Women's Book Groups and the Men's Book Group report separately, but a big thank you to Ann & Peter Tarlton and Conni White for their dedicated leadership of those groups.

Anne Williamson

# Safe Church

The Diocese of New Hampshire introduced a new Safe Church policy and an updated Safe Church Training program in 2013. A copy of the policy, and Bishop Hirschfeld's accompanying letter, is posted on the bulletin board outside the church office. On the value of Safe Church training, Bishop Hirschfeld writes:

Safe Church Training, therefore, is not merely an exercise required by the institutional bureaucracy, mandated by our insurance providers. Much more than that, I urge you to enter into these sessions with a contemplative attitude of openness by which we learn again how to be holy in our interactions with each other and with those, both young and old, who come seeking and expecting holiness in our congregations.

In 2014, Charlie Nichols took on the role of Safe Church Minister at St. John's. We are working together to organize and monitor training for individuals. The training is required for some: Wardens, Treasurer, Kids Church and Youth Leaders, Pastoral Team, EfM mentors and staff but is open to ALL. There are two elements to the new training, a new online training component and attendance at a half day training session.

Progress has been made but there is more to do - as our Bishop has said, having a Safe Church is a benefit to all; St. John's as a Safe Church may be the only place someone, either an adult or a child, feels safe enough to tell someone else their story...that is why it is so important.

Charlie Nichols and Anne Williamson

# **MUSIC MINISTRY**

# **Sunday Morning Liturgy**

St. John's is a community where diversity is embraced in many ways. One of these is in our weekly liturgy. The opportunity to embrace a great variety of music is one of the wonderful aspects of life at St. John's. Both our musical ensembles and the congregation embrace this tradition with laudable enthusiasm.

# **Parish Choir**

The Parish Choir has shown tremendous love and service for our community during the past year. They banded together to provide leadership from within during the interim period when there was no Director of Music. And since my arrival in August, they have proven themselves to be tremendously hard working and dedicated to providing beautiful, life-giving music. It has been a joy to work with this ensemble, and it continues to be fun to dream about our future together.

This ensemble has achieved several tremendous musical feats in the past year. Their complete performance of Michael Haydn's Requiem in C Minor for All Saints Day was quite an accomplishment. The Lessons and Carols service in early December was a huge success, with more than 250 in attendance. The Christmas Eve musical offerings represent another musical milestone. These services are a gift not only to our immediate family, but also to the larger community of Portsmouth and the Seacoast region.

In addition to their tremendous collective musical skill, the choir is a community filled with love. This is evident in the sound they create when they sing together, but it is also evident in how they treat one another. I look forward to more music-making with this ensemble.

# The Choir School at St. John's

2015 saw the inception of the Choir School at St. John's, an after-school tuition-free music program for kids in grades 3-7. This has been a massive undertaking, and has been well-supported by the parish. Volunteers help to supervise the students during snack and homework time on weekdays, help shepherd them on Sundays in weeks when they sing, and in the van on the way to and from the Choir School. Ashley Wade, Liz Bristow, and I are very much enjoying the process of shaping this program. It's a great way to open the doors of St. John's to our wider community.

We have seen great progress in our students already. One student received his first 100% on a test when we quizzed the kids on music note names. One student told us "I wish we could do this 200 hours per week!" Each child has shown progress, and a strong community is beginning to form between students, volunteers, and teachers. We are excited to see this program continue to grow.

# **Concerts on the Hill**

Concerts on the Hill enjoyed great success in its 2015 season. For the first time in many years, its ticket sales enabled it to be financially self-sustaining. COTH has honed its focus on educating audiences in Portsmouth at the same time it brings them top-notch performers. Visiting artists are encouraged to speak with the audience about the music they play, and masterclasses for local youth are paired with concerts. All children are admitted to concerts at no cost to encourage parents to bring their children to hear great music.

In January, 2016, COTH hosted the first in a planned series of annual outreach concerts. The entirety of Portsmouth Middle School's 6th grade class came to St. John's for a music field trip. A professional string quartet and a high school string quartet joined forces to present Felix Mendelssohn's Octet and talk about their instruments. The event concluded with an instrument petting zoo, in which 6th graders were given the chance to hold and play violins, violas, and cellos. The future of this series is exciting. It is a tremendous gift that St. John's has the privilege of sharing with our larger community.

# The Young Organist Collaborative

The Young Organist Collaborative is still moving ahead full-throttle. This year, the program has 15 students enrolled, from first year through eighth year of study. In April, Margaret Harper and Jonathan Wessler gave masterclasses for current students at Christ Church, Exeter. In a July competition, two of our advanced students were awarded a large scholarship for lessons in the 2015-2016 program year. In November, we took the students on a field trip to see the organs and carillon at St. Paul's School in Concord, as well as the organ at the First Church of Christ Scientist in Concord.

YOC's alumni continue to achieve great things. One former student is studying in Toulouse, France for a year under a Fulbright Scholarship and had her Russian concert debut in 2015. Others have performed recitals and been appointed to various church music posts around the country. This program is a gift to churches across the entire country that will one day benefit from musicians who received their initial training right here in Portsmouth, NH.

# **Instruments**

This year, St. John's received on a gift of a Steinway grand piano for Thaxter Hall and a Mason & Hamlin grand piano for the Choir Room. Both of these instruments are in wonderful condition, and are a significant step up from their predecessors. These instruments allow our music program to continue expanding its reach.

I look forward to 2016 and all the adventures it will bring. St. John's is brimming with musical energy and ideas. I am excited for the possibilities that await us all. Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Harper

Director of Music and Liturgy

Margaret Harpen

# **CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAMS**

As we hope the members of our parish body have personally witnessed, 2015 was a fantastic and very full year in the life of the youth program at St. John's. Here's a glimpse at the year by the numbers:

- 198 youth and their families were enrolled in our various programs including Sunday morning "Kids' Church," youth groups, youth choirs, and one-time events.
- Over 20 regular adult volunteers in addition to St. John's staff who support our youth programs
- 35 youth were involved in our annual Christmas Pageant
- 20 young actors, singers, and stage technicians were a part of Seussical Jr., our winter musical
- 14 youth attended a fall retreat to Merrowvista
- 12 youth went through the Rite 13 ceremony in the spring
- Youth engaged in Cooking for Crossroads and Service Sundays monthly

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Bristow focused on the programming for youth in grades 6 through 12, including Sunday morning programming, retreats and missions, Rite 13, and other youth group events. This fall the youth program took a hard turn toward serving the community, or "being the church." Once a month youth are engaged through Cooking for Crossroads and Service Sundays, both of which have been well attended, exceeding expectations.

Kids Church (preK through 5<sup>th</sup> grade) continues to utilize Weaving God's Promises, a comprehensive curriculum that has been well received by students and leaders alike. We continue to incorporate the telling of stories from a Montessori-based curriculum, Godly Play. The stories enrich the children's experience of the lessons covered in Kids Church and through a series of questions and reflections, encourage children to wonder about the stories and characters presented to them. We are very encouraged to witness a greater level of connection to the material with this two-fold curriculum planning.

We (staff and volunteers) continue to focus on drawing out the inherent good within each of the young students, rather than "filling them up" with lessons and rules. The flexibility of everyone working within the Kids Church program is an incredible gift. Our hope is to provide a safe and loving environment for every child who comes through our doors.

Our youth musical *Seussical* was unbelievably fun to put together, and we all had a blast bringing a cast of imaginative characters to life. We continue to offer three children & youth choirs – Cherub Choir, Junior Choir, and the St. J's Singers. Singers currently range in age from 5 years old to 17 years old.

As we look to the future, we hope to cultivate more opportunities for children and youth to deepen their connection with the St. John's community. As a staff, we are committed to working together to recognize these opportunities and to adapt our programs so they will better reflect the character and strength of our children and youth, providing a safe, engaging, and meaningful spiritual experience.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley and Lizzie

Ashley Wade, Director of Children's Music and Ministries

Elizabeth Bristow, Director of Youth Ministries

#### **COMMITTEES AND MINISTRIES**

#### **ALTAR GUILD**

Twenty five dedicated men and women serve as St. John's Altar Guild. Their duties include caring for the altar for all services including weddings, funerals and special events. Members work in teams a month at a time washing and polishing sliver, preparing the elements for the Eucharist, arranging flowers and caring for our many lovely artifacts.

A wedding consultant helps with the many details as couples prepare for their wedding day.

Our funeral coordinator assists families of the deceased prior to the service and is a welcoming presence for all.

A flower chart is maintained in the narthex for anyone wishing to donate flowers for the altar.

Being a member of St. Jon's Altar Guild is a rewarding experience and we welcome all new members.

Bertha H. Rocray, Altar Guild Directress

# **COMMON TABLE**

Uncommon Table: Thanks to the efforts of Conni White, Neely Barnhardt and Dawn Carswell, we had a successful Uncommon Table in June and were able to raise enough money to purchase a commercial dishwasher. Now we do not have to waste paper products and only use paper napkins!

Dining Al Fresco! While new plumbing and the dishwasher were installed this summer, the kitchen was closed. The volunteers rallied round and we made brown bag lunches of sandwiches, chips, cookies and drinks and dined in the space behind the hall. Special thanks to Moe's and Market Basket for discounts on subs! Folks enjoyed eating outside so much that they want to repeat this outdoor fun! Generous parishioners and bakers:

Many thanks to all the folks who donated to Common Table in honor of or in memory of family members or friends.

And a huge thank you to all the bakers for Common Table and the Christmas Day dinner. The free lunch program exists because of your generosity and support.

Judy Roberts, Suzi Raeside and all the volunteers.

# COOKING FOR CROSSROADS HOUSE

In June we passed the Cooking for Crossroads Ministry torch to Lizzie Briscoe and Conni White whose vision is to make it a part of the Youth Program, involving our teens and their families in this valuable community service. We are happy to have such capable team leaders, and such abundant energy for this project. Thank you all. Lacey and Andy Bangs

# **ECONOMY SHOP**

The Common Cents Economy Shop is open Wednesday and Thursday of each week. Shoppers can find household items, jewelry, and adult and children's clothing at reasonable prices. The shop continues its outreach mission by providing donations to local organizations, schools, and The Common Table. For the 2nd year, the shop was opened for children to holiday shop for families and friends and fill a bag for \$1.

This past year the shop was not able to open for the summer due to construction on the parish hall. The past year's contribution to the St. John's General Fund was \$3,633.09.

The staff of The Economy Shop will miss Skip Kulickowski, a dedicated shop volunteer and St. John parishoner who passed away in December. We will fondly remember his wonderful sense of humor.

We would like to thank everyone who makes it possible to keep this shop open with their generous donations. We would also like to thank our volunteers from Great Bay Community Services.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Musselman and Brenda Johnson

# **Funeral Receptions**

We had 7 funeral receptions in 2015. We said good bye to three loyal and long term parishioners in Louise Young, Carl Eric Johnson, and Skip Kulikowski. We had a true celebration of life when the Almeida family took over the decorating of Thaxter Hall to showcase the wonderful artwork of Joseph Almeida. We also hosted the receptions for Regina Hill Schirmer, Steven Orr, and Jan Kilmer Hartman. When we had 50 or less guests, we moved the receptions down to the Philbrook Room.

We welcomed Connie Bushman as our new Funeral coordinator, taking over for Jane Holway. We also were lucky to have Pat Baker join our group that puts on the receptions. Our core hostesses are Elaine Wilson, Sandra Pagel, Laurel Miller, and Margaret Sofio.

We could not do this ministry without the unselfish help of all of you who bake, make sandwiches, or provide fruit trays, vegetable trays, and hour d'oeuvres. No matter how short a time we have to prepare, you step up and offer your bounty so that the families do not have to worry about feeding and entertaining all those who attend the funeral. It is a gift you give to those at some of the lowest points of their lives and it makes a huge difference. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Suzi Raeside and Gladys Butterworth Receptions Co-Chairs

# PRAYER CHAIN

The Prayer Chain by Tim Nolan

My mother called to tell me About an old classmate of mine who was dying on the parish prayer chain -or was very sick -- or destitute –

or it had not worked out the -- marriage -- or the kids were all on drugs -- and

all the old mothers were praying intensely for all the pain of their children

and for life -- they were praying for life -- in their quiet rooms -- sipping decaf coffee --

I bet they've been praying for me at times --So I'll find my way -- so I won't rob a bank --

I'll take them -- the mystical prayers of old mothers It matters -- all this patient and purposeful love.

Every few years we reprint this poem (first published on The Writer's Almanac on NPR in 2006), because it so perfectly captures the essence of what we do.

The Prayer Chain is a quiet and mostly invisible ministry. Our only mission is to pray for those who ask us to -- and we do, every day. We are indeed "praying for life," -- new life -- to be born out of evil and suffering according to God's promises from Genesis to the maps.

"I'll take them" these prayers the poet wrote, and you can take them, too. All you need to do is ask. In our 17 years of being, we have never turned anyone down.

Thank you to Prayer Chain members Helen Gettelman, Kathi Hardy, Myrtle Moore, Karen Parrott, Judy Roberts, Rita Rozek, Sarah Todd, and Barbara Widen.

Respectfully Submitted, Susan Mennel susanmennel@gmail.com 6034302830

# SALVATION ARMY

St. Johns Salvation Army Soup Kitchen volunteers meet the second Friday monthly at the Portsmouth Salvation Army 3:30 to 6:30 P.M. to prepare, cook, serve and clean up for about 50 people the food which St. Johns purchases . Anyone interested in volunteering may call Nancy Fessenden at 603-436-4904, Chair.

# **USHERS**

The past year has been extremely successful thanks to the efforts of many people who have selflessly volunteered their time to help make sure churchgoers are welcomed and that the flow of church services goes smoothly. When things go right, the ushers are not noticed, especially during these "special" services at Easter and Christmas.

We would like to thank the following people for their work during the past year. Bob Mennel, Norah Alexander, Wendy Cote, Art Parrot, Babs Pringle, Pat White, Anne Gabel, Randy Carey, Dixon Turner, Al and Ginny Edwards, Ann Ringling, Dick Davidson, Ronan Donahoe, Bertha Rocray, Gerry Simpkins and Brad Lown. We would like to extend a warm invitation to anyone who would like to make ushering part of their church commitment. It can be a truly rewarding experience and provides a valuable service by extending a warm greeting, especially to first time visitors. All are welcome and it can take up as much or as little of your time as you would like.

Faithfully submitted, Jack Meffen and Judy Perley