



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
2016 ANNUAL REPORT

100 Chapel St.
Portsmouth, NH 03801
603-436-8283
www.stjohnsnh.org

Dear St. John's,

Most of you know that I did not go to seminary and commit my life to the priesthood for the privilege of going to Annual Meetings. However, God moves in mysterious ways and this year I am downright excited about the Annual Meeting! We have many blessings to count and God is doing amazing work in and through our corner of the Kingdom.

One of my foundational beliefs concerning a healthy vibrant parish in this generation is that it not only cares for its own, but it considers and puts effort and resources into addressing the broader community it inhabits. An important question for me is, "How does [St. John's] existence add value to the seacoast community and beyond?" As we consider a capital campaign and how our building can be cared for and improved this question is central to my reflections and prayers and I invite you to join the staff, your vestry and me in this important and exciting work.

Questions that I wonder and pray about currently are: "How does our building promote or prohibit our mission of Welcoming ALL in the name of Christ?" "Does our space mirror and represent our Spirit?" "What opportunities are we missing to serve God and God's people in the seacoast?" "What partnerships would aid in that mission?" and "If we suddenly disappeared, would anyone miss us?"

What are your questions? What are your dreams for this community? The Annual Meeting is the beginning of this process. We will all be invited to attend a focus group of 10 or so in the weeks following the meeting and our plan and strategy will take shape...but again, we NEED your help. Our bishop says it well when he states that, "We have good, sweet work to do!" I pray that you will join us in this truly good, sweet work.

With love and prayers, your rector,



The Rev. Robert E. Stevens, Jr.

CLERK'S REPORT
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES - January 2, 2015

Vestry Members Present: Kelly Boston, Marian Ellis, Randy Carey, Gerry Simpkins, Lee Baxter, John Tabor, Pat Baker, Suzi Raeside, Lacey Bangs, Chris Sieve

9:01 – Welcome – Anna Kay
Lighting of Candle – remind us that God is with us

Anne – Morning Prayer

Approval of Minutes – Marian
Brad Lown, Bill

Voting for Slate – Officers & Vestry Candidates
Nomination – Tim Platt; 2nd Brad Lown

Anna Kay framed each report – news is good, but listen for what we can do next? What more? Who have we not named whom we could be serving. Don't want to stand still and stagnate. Celebrate good news

Treasurer's Report – Kelly

Fiscal report - \$32,000 ahead in 2015;

Thank you for plate & pledge

Parking lot revenue increased

Expenses – Personnel choir school (offset in revenue)

2016 – full audit, as planned

Operating budget is balanced

Assumptions – plate & pledge less

Payroll subsidy – curate

Choir school reimbursement

Facilities use

Parking

Expense

Increase to diocesan pledge

Curate

Building & grounds

Admin costs – full scope of financial audit

Music – maintenance of grand pianos

Common table

Choir school

Managed through restricted funds – stand alone budget

Endowment – take a long term look

Despite annual draws, we have gone up \$200,000 – we are disciplined

That said, our endowment is rather small for our infrastructure and buildings and grounds

Narrative accompanies endowment report in annual report

Stewardship Report – John, Ann, Pat

John – intros, thanks

Ann- Thank canvassers

Pat – thank you to those who shared “Why I pledged”

More pledgers than last year

25 new

58 increased

45 who have traditionally pledged but haven’t had time yet

Still in drive – take a surplus and put it toward long term projects

Buildings & Grounds – Gerry

Foundation work – repair leaks; north side to be done this year

Updating of lighting and electrical (econ shop, stage)

Project report on display – some still need funding; also projected layout of what summer project will entail

Assessment done last year came in with some recommendations (roof w/in 5 years, lower parking lot, walls around lot & by Warner House)

Randy -

Thank you List to team that brought this project over the finish line, especially Laura Lude (Who has basically become project manager)

Overview of improvements from Tebbetts gift: bathrooms, classrooms, main hallways, choir room, Ashley’s office, bonus room upstairs in Thaxter Hall, commercial dishwasher in kitchen

Choir School report –

Anna Kay thanked Meg for her bold vision

Meg:

Anecdote – a boy with a learning disability was able to get 100% on a test because Meg took time to read questions to him and support him; just one example of how the school is giving him an opportunity to succeed through music

Kids progressing through music and life. Learning about building a caring and loving community together.

Possible because SJC community was able to support this mission

Thank you for volunteers: tutoring, cooking,

Lee – Fun Numbers

Pat – Roll/Role Call

Questions/ Clarifications:

We said that we’d like to see the community do more. What kind of projects are we interested in seeing done?

Anna Kay – results of facilities assessment will let inform us about large needs (long term)
We'd like to continue to grow endowment
Choir school could serve more young people
Facilities do go unused (though used greatly) - what are the unmet needs in the community
Becca Stevens work to stop human trafficking – we hope to open a house to bring some women off of the streets

Acknowledgment of those who help with coffee hour

John – previews of points of action

Curate position being filled to help train young priest and help youth program, as well
Peter Tarlton pulled together a group to fund master plan for our buildings (in fairlty good shape, but we need to attend to a few areas if we want to have a strong future)
Vestry has approved a vote to improve the hardscape
We are looking at a 5-7 year long term capital program to improve the parking lot and the buildings

Statements of individual gratitude:

Vestry, Staff, Rob for being such a good shepherd, welcoming all of us
Rob – Thank you to those rotating off (done but not done!)

- Ann
- Pat
- Randy

People behind the scenes – ushers, especially Judy & Jack Meffen

Special acknowledgment – Brad Lown

- Behind the scenes angel; lots of extra work on our behalf
- Negotiates contracts, most recently parking to bring in \$74,000 more in revenue; protected us from major costs from organ repair
- Constant care and guidance to the community

Motion to adjourn – Liz-Anne Platt; 2nd – Karen Parrot

SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

Dear St John's friends,

As I finish my first year as senior warden, the emotion I feel is gratitude for the people of St. John's who do so much to keep our parish vital and growing. I see your faces as I write, and say a hearty thank you to so many others who pitch in with a willing spirit.

Financially, we finish the year with a surplus for the fourth year in a row. Pledge income finished over budget. Jean Lincoln spoke to us on the vestry about encountering Rob at 7 a.m. visiting sick parishioner at Portsmouth Hospital, "I like to think that's what my pledge supports," she said, and that's so true.

After our vestry retreat in February we had many inspirations and two goals – to support Rob and Anne’s desire for a curate to develop our youth programs (as former curate Jeff Thornburg did), and to make our church and buildings more accessible – to the community, to each other, to the disabled, the elderly, those in need. We lost out on a curate candidate last year, but Rob is working hard on this goal in 2017.

We began the long-range improvements to our buildings outlined by a team of Peter Tarlton, Gerry Simpkins and Doug Greene, which furthers our accessibility goals. First, we had to repair the parking lot. The stairs and walls were crumbling. It was dangerous. We convinced the Diocese to loan us money for immediate repairs and Doug Greene and Gerry Simpkins spent a busy spring getting permits and supervising the successful completion of this work. If you appreciate the result, be sure to thank Doug Greene who spent many hours on the site with engineers, contractors and fencing companies. We are forever in his debt. Ultimately, we think the way to solve our accessibility problems is an elevator in Thaxter and a connector to the church. Getting the parking lot to be level with the Philbrick Room door was a first step.

We began planning last spring for a capital campaign in 2017. After interviewing several campaign consultants, we contracted Leslie Pendleton from Episcopal Church Foundation to help us. First, we will gather input from everyone in the “cottage meetings” you’ll hear about today at the annual meeting. Then Leslie will do a feasibility study to determine our church’s capacity and a realistic campaign goal. In the fall, we will do a dual stewardship and capital campaign. This also is the result of the 2015 long-range needs study. A team of Gerry, Doug Greene, Tracy Kozak and Laura Ludes are working with contractors to list all the work, get accurate costs, and set priorities for your gifts. That’s why input at our cottage meetings is so important to give us guidance. All of our assets in the end support our ministries, so we want to dream with you about what those ministries may grow to be in the future, and what more ministries we can create.

The wonderful work of the Common Table feeding those in need on Thursdays continued with one change. In the recession years, the church asked the (self-funded) Common Table to pay a share of the cost of Thaxter, but this year, we ended that practice, putting \$6,000 more towards the Common Table’s mission. That felt good to all of us.

Under Dr. Meg Harper’s leadership, the choir school expanded with the help of many volunteers.

Carol Gruen and Meg Moran led our stewardship campaign. With fresh ideas and energy, they have led us on a pace ahead of last year. How fortunate we are for their great work!

Finally, a word of gratitude to Gerry Simpkins, our junior warden. His can-do spirit and dedication shows in the health of our old church and its grounds. He has spearheaded a plan to generate new revenue from our upper parking lot which will offset our loan costs for the lower lot until our capital campaign is done– he turns our liabilities into assets for us.

So we turn to 2017 with lofty goals and a vision of a thriving community whose physical environs will some day mirror this community’s energy and spiritual richness. God is calling us to not be content with what we know, but to aspire to be more in many ways!

John Tabor, Senior Warden

TREASURER'S KEY MESSAGES

2016 continued to be a good year for St. John's fiscal health. We anticipate ending the year \$10-15K ahead! We have changed/improved our financial system which will simplify the work. We are in the final stages of closing the 2016 books and we anticipate positive results of a 3rd Party audit review which will take place in early February, once completed I will issue the official Treasurer's Report.

Revenue for 2016 vs. Budget 2016 **was lower by \$45K**. Main drivers include:

- Total Pledge & Plate offerings was favorable by \$10K, approximately \$578K.
- Endowment draw was \$64K (4.5%).
- Variances from our budget assumptions include eliminating Common Table revenue of \$6K, less revenue from Facility use \$3K and lower parking lot revenue of \$26K (consistent with prior year but overestimated in our budgeting last year). And due to the delayed hiring of the Curate, we did not receive the contribution of \$20K.

Expenses for 2016 vs. Budget 2016 **is favorable by \$45K**. Main drivers include:

- Total expenses of approximately \$758K for year.
- Spending was lower in people primarily due to the delay in hiring our Curate.
- Most operating expenses were less than our budget assumptions.
- For 2016, we have a unique situation, we paid approximately \$18K of loan & interest payment for the Parking Lot Project. We were able to absorb this expense within our operating budget. This loan was a way of bridging between our immediate improvement needs and our capital campaign.

I am pleased to announce that we have a balanced 2017 Operating Budget of \$847K.

Overall Revenue for 2017 vs. Actual 2016 has **increased by \$88K** Main drivers include:

- Our Pledge & Plate assumption is \$15K more than actual 2016 (budget assumption \$593K, vs actual of \$578K). SO THANK YOU!! We have made great progress with 249 pledges and \$485K in current pledges, please help in any way to get us to 300 pledges and meeting or exceeding our goal of \$510K.
- Funding or a Payroll subsidy for our new "Seacoast Youth" Curate position (\$20K from St. Andrews) and Choir School reimbursement.
- Two Endowment Draws: one assumed at \$68.9K for 2016, which is 4.5% of the 3 Year rolling average balance the other \$43K for Parking Lot Project which is to be restored by unbudgeted parking kiosk revenue)

Expenses for 2017 vs. Actual 2016 has **increased by \$89K.**

- Most operating expenses overall have not increased year over year and we have absorbed the curate in our balanced operating budget for the work of the church.
- Increased our diocesan pledge by \$10K compared to 2016 (\$100K in 2016).
- New Curate position starting July 1st (2017 impact \$63K, partially offset as mentioned in revenue).
- The expense budget includes a full staff to support programs, care and outreach, modest adjustments to clergy and staff to keep compensation competitive and recognize merit.
- For 2017 we have a unique situation, we have to add a full year of loan & interest payment for the Parking Lot Project. The expense of \$43K has been offset by an additional draw from the Endowment in our balanced budget. Our goal is to “repay the Endowment” with additional parking lot revenue from the Kiosks.
- As a reminder, we have other important programs not part of the operating budget but the mission of St. John’s include Common Table and Choir school. These programs are self funding.

In Summary, 2016 was another good year “in the black”. We have operated within balance budgets for the past 4 years and 2017 will be no different. Once issued, I would encourage you to read through the Treasurer’s Report which further illustrates the details of our 2017 planned spending.

Kelly Boston, Treasurer

**JR. WARDEN
PROJECTS REPORT**

<u>Projects</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Date Completed</u>	<u>Est. Cost</u>	<u>Final Cost</u>
1. Move light switch and install more outlets in economy shop and lighting and outlets in hall outside of economy shop	Completed	May 2016 Job also included motion sensor’s in bathroom and new outlets for kitchen and stage	\$2500.00	\$3,125.00
2. Ceiling and lighting and update kitchen in Philbrick room	Completed	Aug 2016	\$14,915	\$15,000

3. Foundation work in basement of church on south side wall	Completed Jan 2016	\$6,300.00	\$6,300.00
4. Hardscape Project, New Retaining walls, stairs and parking lot	Completed	\$225,000.00	\$244,000.00
5. Install motion sensor Devices in bathrooms, Move outlet in kitchen And new outlet on stage	Completed with economy project.	\$525.25	
6. Clean and paint tunnel Floor outside Economy shop	Completed		\$82.00
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. Complete counters in Kitchen, stainless steel Tops to remaining counters	Waiting on quote		
10. Install storm windows(4) For windows in new Office and two in Hall	Working on pricing		
11. Inspect/maintain fire Extinguishers.	Annual	\$400.00	
12. Cleaning of carpets	Annual	\$700.00	
13. Inspect/test fire alarm system	Annual	\$475.00	
14. Snow removal	Seasonal	\$8,700	
15. Lawn care	Seasonal	\$900.00	
16. Window Cleaning	Annual	\$600.00	

ASSOCIATE RECTOR'S REPORT

St. John's Pastoral Care

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. The Portsmouth Ministerium (the association of Seacoast faith leaders) is looking at the provision of support to those seeking to 'age in place' on a community-wide basis.

We have 23 people signed up on the NeighborCare data base, as both givers and receivers of NeighborCare but there have been more than 23 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 Boston!), physical therapy and the grocery store, visited the housebound, residents of nursing homes and patients in the hospital and rehab, 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

BibleWorkbench (now Wednesday mornings from 10:30-12:00) and St. John's Night (Wednesday Evenings 7-8:15) have continued throughout 2016. Adult Forum (Sunday mornings 9-9:45) met during the first half of 2016, had a break in the Autumn and will be back for Lent 2017.

We concluded 'The Year of Pilgrimage' and began 'The Year of Prayer' in autumn 2016. In the first half of the year, Sunday mornings we offered Gospel Chat. This was offered during the Adult Forum slot between the services – Gospel Chat is an opportunity to read and discuss the Gospel for the following week. On Wednesday mornings, a group meets to discuss one of the readings for the following Sunday using the BibleWorkbench resource, followed by Midday Prayer. In the first half of 2016, Wednesday evening's St. John's Night participants continued to read *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 the Autumn, the offering was 'Poetry and Prayer', through November, and for Advent, 'Walking Through Advent', an Iona resource, with the group meeting from 7:00-8:00, again followed by Compline.

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

In addition to the regular formation offerings, there were a variety of other formation opportunities. In January, The 2016 Trinity Institute program '*Listen for A Change*', organized by Trinity Episcopal Church Wall Street, was live-streamed into the Philbrick Room. In February and March, a Lent series by the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE) entitled '*Growing a Rule of Life*' was offered with different groups meeting on Sunday mornings and Friday evenings. Many thanks to Charlie Nichols and Neely Barnhardt for co-leading that offering. In May, Linda McVay offered a Compassionate Listening workshop, sharing a practice learned in her work in Israel/Palestine. A ChurchNext course with Parker Palmer, '*Bridging the Political Divide*' was offered on two occasions in October. Many thanks to Charlie Nichols for handling the technical piece for the Trinity Institute, SSJE and ChurchNext offerings. Also offered in Lent was a wonderful quiet day with Robert Jonas - many thanks to Jane Begala for that opportunity, and to all the members of Ann Tarlton's book group for their efforts organizing the day.

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. The training covers three years and the first wave of those trained under the new system have been re-certified. A copy of the policy, and Bishop Hirschfeld's accompanying letter, is posted on the bulletin board outside the church office and in the Narthex. 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 2016, Joanne Ferguson took on the role of Safe Church Administrator at St. John's. Many thanks to Charlie Nichols for his work in that role in 2015 and 2016. Joanne is now the one organizing and monitoring training and background checks. Training and background checks are required for some: Wardens, Treasurer, Kids Church, Choir School and Youth Group Volunteers, Pastoral Team, EfM mentors and staff but is open to ALL. There are two elements to the new training, an online training component and attendance at a half day training session. We are working to offer Safe Church training on-site at SJC and had an on-site training in September 2016.

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.

Anne Williamson

Millennium Development Goals 2015 allocation – reports from Angola and Cuba
Angola – Susan Lassen

Albertina School 'Under the Tree' The support from St. John's Church makes the difference in Ombanja, Cunene Angola. Report Dr Gertrude Wafula and Susan Lassen Jan 17th 2017

The thirst for knowledge by children from Omwandi village in Ombanja Cunene continues to blossom, thanks to the support received from St John's Church Portsmouth NH.

In May 2016, after visiting the school in June, the number of children had doubled from 50 to 116 pupils. They had not just grown in numbers but were happy to show the skills in writing poetry, maths and language (Oshikwanambo, English and some Portuguese). Albertina then had a second teacher (volunteer helping) who has since left to look for a paid role.

From the Support given by the St. Johns church, we have been able to have Albertina, the teacher travel to Onjiva for personal development and teacher training for two months from December to January. The funds helped pay for mentoring and coaching in Portuguese, accommodation for two months, living expenses for Albertina, and travel to Onjiva and back to her village. Learning Portuguese will help Albertina transfer the skills to all children who currently speak Oshiwambo and English. This will prepare them for transition in the Angolan education system.

The teacher is also being trained to understand other aspects of teaching such as lesson plans and delivering teaching materials to learners. She is also being introduced to the teaching syllabus offered by the ministry of education in Angola. It is expected these skills will help her develop as a teacher and help her do a better and a professional job when back in Ombanja in February.

An assessment of her progress on the training and her future aspirations will be reviewed with her before end of January 2017 and further plans arranged for her continuous development.

During the flood in April last year the community attempted to respond to the needs of the children. The classroom the community built out of tree twigs was a real gesture of commitment and was needed to support the school even with very limited resources. They had plans to raise funds to buy 3 iron sheets targeted by end of the year with each villager contributing 5 Namibian dollars. The last trip in October to the village we met with the teacher, the chief/headman in company of Fr Mbala of Onjiva and a team to measure the construction of a shelter (4 rooms, 40 children each and storage/staffroom). The budget estimates have been done for future building and now depends on resources. Building a permanent structure entitles the school to get support from the government. The expected visit of Bishop Rob Hirschfield hoped for in 2017 will be great.

A special thanks to St John for the support and the difference being made to so many children.

Cuba

Relationships and Clean Water Flow in Cuba

by Charlie Nichols, St John's, Portsmouth

April, 2016

New and renewed relationships and clean drinking water were the order of the day for fourteen NH Episcopalians on pilgrimage to Cuba from April 2-9, 2016. Led by The Rev Mark Pendleton, Rector of Christ Church, Exeter, the group made its base in Cardenas at the parish of St Francis of Assisi, with whom Exeter shares a companion relationship.

From Cardenas, the group made day visits to churches and parishioner's homes in Limonar, Bolondron, and Coliseo. Highlights of the pilgrimage are always the opportunity to break into smaller groups for walking visits to parishioner's homes. Led by a lay woman from the parish – or in Limonar, the parish deacon – we gather for conversation and deep listening to the stories of life in Cuba's villages, and hear how Jesus is alive and moving in their midst.

During our 2015 visit, we delivered a water filtration system to St John the Evangelist, the parish church in Coliseo. The system could not be installed at the time due to plumbing requirements at the church and the situation was further complicated by a neighbor who controlled the water supply to the church. On this trip, we learned St John's recently received a \$10,000 gift - enough to purchase the neighboring house. This means St John's will now have a rectory, and control of the property's water supply to enable installation of the filtration system.

One significant component to the installation of a filtration system includes a faucet in a public location. During our time in Cardenas, we observed many villagers waiting in line to fill their containers with clean water.

In addition to Exeter, other parishioners travelled from St. John's, Portsmouth; Good Shepherd, Nashua; and Transfiguration, Derry. Everyone involved looks forward to deepening relationships with the loving and Spirit-filled people of the Episcopal Church in Cuba.

Celtic Evening

In September 2016, we began offering a monthly Celtic Evening Service. These candlelight services of Celtic music, poetry and reflection are offered at 5:30pm on the third Sunday of the month. The themes for 2016 were Care and Concern for Creation, Justice and Peace, Welcome and Hospitality and Blue Christmas. Many thanks to the Celtic Evening planning team of Holly Gagnon, Charlie Nichols, Christine Niles, Courtney Patrick and Anne Webber for their vision and commitment, and to Anne Rehner, Olin Johannessen and Sue Nalewajk for their support.

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 members of the Parish Choir at St. John's have proven themselves to be tremendously hard working and dedicated to providing beautiful, life-giving music. It is a joy to work with this ensemble. One of my favorite parts of my job is planning each next musical adventure we will take in coming seasons!

This ensemble has achieved several tremendous musical feats in the past year. Their complete performance of Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem* for All Saints Day was quite an accomplishment. The Lessons and Carols service in early December was a huge success, with more than 350 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. The program entered its second year in the Fall of 2016. 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, Kathi Hardy, 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. Each child has shown progress socially and musically, and a strong community is beginning to form between students, volunteers, and teachers. We have been at maximum capacity this entire program year, with a booming wait list. The energy that our kids have for music and each other is palpable, and we have begun discussions about how to responsibly expand our program. Our 5-year goal is to double in size from 15 to 30 students. We have a lot of work to do to build the program's support structures, but I am confident that we will continue in this dynamic work. We are excited to see the ways the choir school is changing lives in our city!

Concerts on the Hill

Concerts on the Hill enjoyed great success in its 2016 season. For a second year in a row, 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 2016, we hosted 7 concerts, ranging from a Georgian folk group to fanfares for organ and brass

instruments. This season celebrated the 15th anniversary of our Létourneau organ by showing the many possibilities of the instrument, pairing organ with all kinds of other musical forces.

Most importantly, 2016 saw the first in what will be come an annual field trip to St. John's from Portsmouth Middle School's 6th grade class. Students trekked over to the church and heard a professional string quartet, as well as a high school string quartet. They learned about musical instruments, composition techniques, and heard great music. They even got to try the instruments afterward! This annual event is a great way to open the church's doors to our wider community and provide a service that is not otherwise available to our youth. This event is payed for by the profits of the concert season – there is no charge to the school or to students to participate.

The Young Organist Collaborative

The Young Organist Collaborative is still moving ahead full-throttle. This year, the program has 18 students enrolled, from first year through eighth year of study. In April, Colin Lynch and Peter Sykes gave masterclasses for current students at Christ Church, Exeter. In a July competition, one of our advanced students was awarded a large scholarship for lessons in the 2016-2017 program year. In November, we took the students on a field trip to see several large organs around Kennebunkport, Maine.

YOC's alumni continue to achieve great things. One former student won the National Young Artists Competition in Organ Playing, the most prestigious organ performance competition in this country. Others have performed recitals and been appointed to various church music posts around the country. Jen McPherson, a former organ scholar of this parish, accepted a post as Minister of Music at First Scots Presbyterian Church in Charleston, SC. 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.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Harper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margaret Harper
Director of Music and Liturgy

CHILDREN'S MUSIC AND MINISTRIES

As we hope the members of our parish body have personally witnessed, 2016 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:

- 150 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
- 30 youth were involved in our annual Christmas Pageant
- 25 young actors, singers, and stage technicians were a part of *Shrek Jr.*, our annual musical
- 17 youth attended a fall retreat to Merrowvista
- 13 youth went through the Rite 13 ceremony in the spring
- Youth engaged in Cooking for Crossroads and Service Sundays monthly

This year, the youth programs continued to serve the community, "being the church" outside our walls. 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 5th grade) continues to evolve, utilizing several different curriculums including Weaving God's Promises, Godly Play, and the Episcopal Children's "Shell" Curriculum. 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 as we mold to the needs of our kids and families.

We (staff and volunteers) continue to focus on drawing out the inherent good within each of the young students. 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. We have made a concerted effort to get all volunteers equipped with the complete Safe Church training.

We are working on creating more space for community together every Sunday morning. This year we are experimenting with gathering in Thaxter Hall and singing together in a musical "Call to Worship" before heading to our Sunday School classes. Victor Tracy, a highschool senior, has been leading this time with our kids. Children have become comfortable with many new songs, saying the Lord's Prayer, and giving an offering each week. We will continue to fine-tune this time together as we move forward.

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

Not to be overlooked, the Pageant and Christmas Eve Family Service were my favorite of all my time here. I am so proud of our younger children rising up to take on bigger roles and solos. I am so blessed to know them and work with them!

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

Ashley Wade,
Director of Children's Music and Ministries

YOUTH PROGRAM

The 2016/2017 year was launched with "Surfing with the Rector" on a beautiful Sunday afternoon this past fall. In late September, 20 middle and high schoolers attended the St. John's Youth Retreat at Merrowvista — the weather didn't entirely cooperate but Merrowvista continues to be a very special place for St. John's to start the school year.

The Youth Program has been focused on serving the broader Seacoast community. Last year, we took over a monthly food ministry of Cooking for Cross Roads. This service had been provided by Lacey and Andy Bangs, Tony Young, Herb Kingsbury, Helen Gettelman, and Mary Turner from St. John's as well as several other non-parishioners - Charles Eldredge, Ann Myer, Carolyn Absher and Pam Herring and after 15 years this group decided it was time to pass the torch. It has been a great privilege to have partnered with Conni White in cooking the first Wednesday of every month for Cross Roads House. The middle and high schoolers gather in Thaxter Hall after school to make everything from Mexican lasagna to banana cream pudding!

We have also begun a Service Sunday program, which allows the middle and high schoolers to go out into the community on a Sunday morning and be the Church! We have helped prepare gift baskets for Thanksgiving, set-up for the December gift give-away through Seacoast Adopt-a-Block, and hosted a coffee and breakfast for some of the disabled and elderly residents living in Portsmouth Housing Authority apartments in town.

The middle schoolers have designed and illustrated prayer books to be distributed to those in the community in need. This has been a wonderful experience for all involved and has generated lots of rich conversation.

Rite 13 continues to be an important celebration at St. John's with over roughly fourteen 13/14 year olds participating every year. The Ceremony is always held on Mother's Day and is a beautiful honoring of the youth at St. John's and their families.

It is an privilege to work with the middle and high schoolers of St. John's — thank you for sharing your kids with us!

With peace and love,

Rick and Neely Barnhardt, Lizzie Bristow, Denise Croteau, and Doug Greene
St. John's Youth Leaders

COMMITTEES AND MINISTRIES

ALTAR GUILD

If you enjoy decorating, working with antiques, polishing silver given by Queen Caroline or caring for the many priceless artifacts we have, please join St. John's Altar Guild. We are a group of 26 men and women who work in teams of 4 or 5 and serve for one month at a time. We are responsible for all services, including weddings, funerals and special events. We also have a wedding consultant and a funeral coordinator to help with these special services.

Another way to serve the Altar guild is by contributing altar flowers. Perhaps you would like to offer flowers in celebration of a special event in your life or in thanksgiving for blessings received, and of course in memory of a loved one. A flower chart on the bulletin board in the narthex will give you available dates.

A special thanks to all who contributed to our Easter and Christmas fund and to those who have contributed flowers for our Sunday services.

Bertha H. Rocray, Altar Guild Directress

COMMON TABLE

DID YOU KNOW----???

Every Thursday for the last 16 years, people from all across the Seacoast area come to St. John's Common Table for a nutritious meal served in a joyous atmosphere.

Our guests share food, conversation, laughter, friendship and caring. It has become a real community.

Common Table currently has seven seacoast chefs who donate their time and expertise. Since 2001, more than thirty chefs have offered their services. A Dessert Brigade of generous parishioners and others bake homemade desserts every week.

We have never lacked for volunteers. We draw from the larger Seacoast community, as well as from our parish. Extra help comes from Cornerstone School, Easter Seals, Life Share, the Great Bay Training Center, and Portsmouth High School.

Each week volunteers set up tables, help prepare and serve the food, wash the dishes, clean the kitchen and Hall, pick up donated bread to distribute to those in need, deliver any extra food to Crossroads and Salvation Army and recycle glass and plastic items.

Guests can receive medical help right in the parking lot from Marge, the Families First mobile health van. They can also shop at St. John's Common Sense Economy Shop, often for free.

The lunch program which serves 120- 150 folks weekly costs an average of \$275. Donations continue to keep Common Table going. You can help by making a donation in any amount in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one. You can feed a table of ten for \$27.50 or the whole room for \$275.

One of our guests once wrote “As soon as you enter the door there is a lot of LOVE waiting for you. All the volunteers wait on you and take the time to sit and talk with you. It is the highlight of the week. Some people live very lonely lives and it really gives them a wonderful day. The volunteers love to help you, be it food, take-home meals, free clothes, bread or fresh veggies. The overall experience has made me a happier person and it gives me something fun to look forward to.”

Common Table exists because of your generosity. We volunteers and all our guests send a big THANK YOU for your continued support.

Submitted by Margaret Sofio, Judy Roberts, Suzi Raeside

COOKING FOR CROSSROADS HOUSE

See Youth Program for information.

THE COMMON CENTS ECONOMY SHOP

The St. John's Common Cents Economy Shop is open Wednesday and Thursday of each week. On Thursdays the shop is open during The Common Table meal, giving diners the opportunity to shop or stop in for a visit with our friendly staff.

It is through the generous donations of parishioners and others in our community that the shop is able to provide household goods and name brand adult and children's clothing at extremely reasonable prices.

We continue to fill specific requests for individuals, families, and local nonprofits. This past year, the shop received over a dozen requests for warm winter clothing, sleeping bags, and blankets.

Our goal is to remain accessible and affordable to all.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Musselman and Brenda Johnson

OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

This is a group of dedicated and faithful folks who helps with phone coverage during any of Joanne's absences or vacation time. In addition, they stamp, sticker, and stuff the materials for numerous church mailings, including pledge letters, follow-ups, and statements, as well as mailings for Concerts on the Hill, the Young Organist Collaborative, and the Choir School at St. John's. All of these materials are prepared and organized by Joanne, whose help is invaluable, and whose encouragement always makes a chore much more fun.

PRAYER CHAIN

In response to Joanne's invitation to be less static and more specific in our annual reports, I will share the Prayer Chain story of one of our parishioners.

In 2008, she was scheduled for surgery at 12:00 noon. Then it was delayed for an hour, so the Reiki healer arrived at noon to prepare her for the ordeal. She took one step into the room where the patient was lying in bed and stopped in her tracks.

"Where is the energy in this room coming from?" she asked. The woman noticed that the clock was at 12:00 and said, "Oh, this is the time my surgery was supposed to start, so everybody on our church prayer chain is praying for me right now."

"Oh, so that's it!" the healer said, "Prayer Energy! I've never felt such peace in a patient's room before." She then laid her hands on the woman, and both of them were amazed by the patient's (uncharacteristic) peacefulness in body and spirit.

I know this story is true because I was that patient. The Reiki healer knew nothing about the prayers; yet, trained to be energy-sensitive, she instantly felt their power.

Since the Prayer Chain began 17 years ago, we have often been amazed by the ways that the Holy Spirit uses our prayers for those who ask. You may wonder, as I have, Why should we still be surprised?

The answer is not that we pray without faith that God hears us; we know He does—but that awe is the only possible human reaction to God's infinite grace and mercy. Awe and thanksgiving. And humility.

All are welcome to add a name to the daily prayer list, and all requests for confidentiality are honored.

Contact susanmennel@gmail.com or call 603-430-2830, and your request will be sent to those who are called to the ministry of prayer: Helen Gettelman, Kathi Hardy, Myrtle Moore, Karen Parrott, Judy Roberts, Sarah Todd, and Barbara Widen.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Mennel

SALVATION ARMY

St. John's volunteers serve every second Friday of each month at the Portsmouth Salvation Army Soup Kitchen. Nancy Fessenden arrives before 3:30pm to deliver the \$125 donation through St. John's outreach. Our volunteers prepare, service and clean up the dining room and kitchen from 3:30 to 6:30pm. Our diners number from 30 to 60 for dinner that consists of mashed potatoes, meat, vegetables, fruit, bread and butter, dessert and drinks.

Submitted by: Nancy Fessenden, Chair