

*Preach the Gospel at all times.  
If necessary, use words.  
-St. Francis of Assisi*

**The Annual Meeting of Saint Francis Episcopal Church  
Holden, Massachusetts**

**Sunday, January 21, 2024**



Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union;  
where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.833

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**THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF  
ST. FRANCIS EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**Sunday, January 21, 2024**

**AGENDA**

- † The Annual Meeting Convened
- † Opening Prayer

Almighty and ever living God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with us as we take counsel in Saint Francis, Holden, for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(BCP 818 - #12)

- † Reading and Adoption of the Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting
- † Presentation of Annual Reports
  - (1) Rector's Report
  - (2) Wardens' Report
  - (3) Other reports (by title)
- † Report of the Nominating Committee
- † Elections
- † Report on the 2024 Budget for Mission and Ministry
- † Other business
- † Adjournment
- † Dismissal:
  - Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
  - Thanks be to God.**

## The ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF ST. FRANCIS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Sunday, January 22, 2023

The Reverend Patrick Perkins convened the meeting at 11:55 am. The rector prayed "Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

A motion to waive the reading of the 2022 Annual Meeting minutes and accept as presented in the Annual Report, made by Kathy Dixon, seconded by Matt Surabian, passed.

### **Presentation of the Annual Reports:**

**Rector's Report** (The Rev. Perkins) - The rector thanked the community for its work the past three years. It has been hard for us as a faith community, for the diocese, and for the world. The rhythm of life has changed. We are no longer in a time "to get through" but instead a time to continue to innovate. "What we do and how we do it is reflective of the time we live in." We need to examine these things we do and decide if or what we need to do differently. One example is our Youth Group program. The lives and needs of our young people have changed and after a short "breather" we are in the process of rethinking this ministry to best meet the needs of this vital group within our community. It is scary to rethink the way we do church. There is a lot of opportunity to go out and do God's work in the world. There are many ideas for ministry, one example being "Sacred Community" which deals with racism, a theme the vestry may study in the coming year. Take your questions and concerns, ideas for ministry and programs, to your prayers. The reports within the Annual Report are a good way to familiarize yourself with our many ministries, and which might be of interest to try out.

**Wardens' Report** (Susan Bastardo) - The junior warden thanked Senior Warden Bryan Diehl (who was not present) for his work as senior warden for the past three years and out-going vestry member Laura Caswell, each of whom served an extra year in their terms due to the difficulty of changing leadership positions during the pandemic, as well the other members of the vestry for their support during this time. The junior warden hopes to continue to work on communication and thanks the ministry chairs and vestry liaisons for their work in this effort. Please take the time to read "The Little Portion" to learn about the many ways you can serve if you feel called.

The rector invited to the floor any ministry chairs who wish to address the meeting:

**Mission Ministries** - Chair Julie Russell thanked the parish for "answering the call to help" in 2022. "We are climbing out of the pandemic" but homelessness and hunger continue. Central Mass Housing Alliance benefited from the purchase of Hope for Housing cards, with many new vendors added this year. Dismas Farm, Abby's House, Mustard Seed, Mampong Orphanage in Ghana, Department of Children and Families (DCF,) Episcopal Relief and Development all were grateful recipients of the generosity of the St. Francis community. Thanks to Estaban Loustaunau for his careful selections for our spring movie nights. Mission Ministries is mindful of asking too much of the people of this parish. With the assistance of Deacon Jane Griesbach and musician Erik Gladwin, this ministry is considering a possible spring concert event. If you have any ideas please let us know.

**Property** - Chair Steve Henning updated the gathering with some of the most pressing property issues the church is facing including windows in Fellowship Hall and lighting in the nave (light bulbs for those fixtures are no longer produced.) These repairs will be expensive and will get more so the longer we wait. There is also a lack of workers for contractors doing this work which adds to the delay and possible expense. This committee can always use assistance whether it be for minor repairs, or just help "holding a ladder or carrying things." The chair asks "if you see something, say something."

**Finance Committee** - Chair Chris Berglund introduced ministry chairs who were present and thanked them for their service.

**Handbell Choir** - Director Erik Gladwin is thankful for the support of all the ringers and the congregation, and is looking forward to growing this choir.

**Report of the Nominating Committee** (The Rev. Perkins) - The Nominating Committee consists of the Executive Committee (senior and junior wardens, clerk, treasurer, and any outgoing vestry members - this year Laura Caswell.) A few years ago our vestry voted to reduce our vestry members from nine people, each serving three year terms, to six people serving three year terms. The number was increased from six to nine many years ago when the church added the Saturday night service. The vestry feels that six people better reflects our congregation at this time. The slate of candidates for 2023:

One year terms: Senior Warden - Susan Bastardo, Junior Warden - Craig Stanovich, Treasurer - Ann Tripp, Clerk - Dawn Rooke

Three-year vestry terms expiring in 2026: Tina Chen, Matt Surabian

Convention Delegates: Dick Delorme, Dawn Rooke, Susan Bastardo

Convention Delegate Alternates: Craig Stanovich, Bev Giarusso

A motion for the clerk to cast one ballot for the slate of candidates as presented, made by Kathy Dixon, seconded by Steve Henning, passed unanimously.

The rector presented Laura Caswell with a gift in thanks for her service on the vestry.

**Report on the 2023 Plan for Mission and Ministry** (Finance Committee Chair Chris Berglund) - The budget was passed by the vestry earlier in the month. Revenue is projected to be similar to 2022. Expenses projected to be about \$20,000 higher than 2022 due mainly to increased utility costs, staff salary increases, and the addressing of some property concerns. A \$46,000 deficit is forecast, though we are in a good cash position to handle it. We have \$300,000 in cash on the Balance Sheet with only \$80,000 of that in restricted funds. Many thanks to Treasurer Ann Tripp and Finance Committee member Dick Delorme for their finance work this past year.

For 2022, income came in at 98% of the budget. 2022 ended with a deficit of \$18,591, lower than the predicted \$19,500. Some 2022 pre-paid pledges came in in 2021 which accounts for some of the lower than expected income. A planned \$5,000 transfer from the Mission and Ministry Fund was not made due to the downturn in the market.

The rector thanked Chris Berglund for his work on the budget with the Finance Committee. The rector explained that in the Episcopal Church, churches are assessed by their diocese each year. The St. Francis assessment for 2023, which we will pay to the Episcopal Diocese of Western Mass, is \$35,000. The diocese is assessed by the National Church.

**New Business:** Mary Jude Pigsley thanked Dawn Rooke for her years of service as Clerk of the Vestry, as well as for organizing hospitality/fellowship events including today's lunch and the upcoming Shrove Tuesday dinner.

There was no other business.

A motion to adjourn the meeting, made by Dick Delorme, seconded by Laura Caswell, passed. The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dawn Rooke, Clerk

#### From the Parish Register ~ January – December 2023

**Baptisms – 3**

**Marriages – 0**

**Confirmations – 0**

**Received – 0**

**Burials – 9**

**Transfers out – 6**

**Transfers in – 9**

**Saint Francis Episcopal Church  
Holden, Massachusetts  
In the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts**

**Mission Statement**

We seek to be instruments of God's peace, bearing witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ for all people.

**Vision Statement**

Living into the Baptismal Covenant, we strive to grow into the full stature of Christ. We are committed to common prayer, life-long Christian formation, mission to the world, and grateful stewardship as we live out Jesus' command to love God and our neighbor.

**Core Values**

1. Faith is a life-long journey; it is not certainty, but trust in God. We celebrate the fact that at any given time we are at different places in that journey.
2. As an Episcopal Church, we rejoice in the richness and diversity of the Anglican Communion. Our faith is rooted in Scripture, tradition, and reason.
3. We take Christian formation seriously for every generation, and especially by laying a strong foundation in church school and through our vital youth ministry program.
4. Francis of Assisi is said to have challenged his friends to "preach the gospel at all times; when necessary to use words." We are committed to mission and outreach as a visible witness to the world of our love for God, particularly in hands-on ways that strengthen relationships and transform lives.
5. We believe that our earth and all of life is a gift from a gracious and loving God: in response to God's many blessings we seek to become, with God's help, more faithful stewards of our time, talents, and treasure.

Revised and passed by Vestry, November 11, 2009

## RECTOR'S REPORT

*"Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen, and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9)*

I believe the process of writing a piece for the Annual Meeting report is largely a reflective exercise, with a bit of forward thinking sprinkled in to help connect the past to the future. This year, I would like to reflectively wander a bit beyond this past year, 2023. This is my tenth Annual Meeting as the rector of St. Francis Church and my second sabbatical is just a few months away, so I thought I would broaden the horizon of my reflection. As someone who loves history, I realize that it is often many months (if not years) after an event occurs that the impact of that event can be objectively considered. Although each act is done with certain intentions, the actual results and lasting impact are simply part of a complex web of actions and results. This is also true of our Christian life as a faith community - our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. We take intentional acts to spread the Good News of Christ, but we do so in an ever-changing world about us; we do so in relationship to others, some who share our values and some who do not. We might begin to wonder and question our impact in our world: yet, as the Apostle Paul would have said, "Let us not lose heart, God is with us!"

In my relatively short time as a member of this community, I have reflected on my first five years, and my second five years...and given some thought about what the future might ask of us. When I arrived at St. Francis in 2014, although the challenges of living in a largely secular society were long present, the programs and ministries of our community remained vibrant and devoutly faced the challenging environment of the times. I attribute this to the devotion and faith of the many people of our community, and the blessings of the many volunteers who made our ministries strong. Some of our greatest challenges during this time were the growth of financial stewardship from annual and legacy giving, and the renewal of our volunteer base to perpetuate strong membership for our ministry teams. Our community took up the Renewal Works process to address these challenges. Progress was very good, and then the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world, and began the time of my second five years. The closure of the church building and the worship space for an extended time was heart-breaking, but we faithfully persevered. Many of our ministries were significantly impacted, especially worship, Youth Group, Acolytes, and others. While some ministries limped along or even flourished in new ways (Mission Ministries), others ceased to exist. The world continued to rotate, and many aspects of people's lives continued. Some members of our community moved to new places or passed away; and no new members found their way to our doors. Our community was smaller in all aspects of biblical stewardship: time, talent, treasure, and membership. I believe the faith and devotion of our community, mentioned above, brought us safely beyond these troubled waters, and today we are gaining in every measure of biblical stewardship. Our future is bright as we follow Christ into a challenging world.

As we begin the year, 2024, I am blessed to begin a new decade of ministry with the amazing people of St. Francis. As we look to the future of our faith community, I am reminded of the words spoken by President Kennedy as he considered the challenges of the changing world: "We meet in an hour of change and challenge, in a decade of hope and fear, in an age of both knowledge and ignorance." And for us, as followers of Christ, I would add, in a time that calls us to courageously bear witness to the miraculous grace of God. We do these things, as Kennedy said, "not because they are easy, but because they are hard..." because God has asked us to be the faithful people of God's grace in the world. The future can loom large with unknown challenges, but God is faithful and always present as a source of strength. I pray you will be encouraged to consider new ways to be an instrument of God's blessings. Regardless of what you choose to consider, I pray that this coming year will bless you and help you to hear God's invitation to a deeper relationship of love and grace.

Faithfully in Christ,  
Patrick Perkins

## DEACON'S REPORT

*A note from the Deacon . . .*

*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God words of praise — the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*  
*Hebrews 13:15-16*

I write this while I'm snowed in from the first big storm. Living in Charlton, in a wooded area, on a dead end road, has its perks. It's quiet. Very quiet. I share my outdoor space with assorted critters (lots of birds, some fox and deer, an occasional black bear). I share my indoor space with Gus the goofy Golden and Ziva the curious cat. They're both 12 yrs. old and I'm – well let's just say we're growing old together.

Another year at St. Francis has passed and it was a good one. St. Francis has provided a safe and loving place for so many people – including me.

The Saturday night worship service ended. That brought some tears. Thankfully, those faithful to that service found their way to one of our Sunday services. The year brought many “new” people to St. Francis. They dove right in to our community. They bring their God given gifts and their smiles. What a blessing that is!

I serve with the Mission Ministry folks. They're all a committed bunch. I like to think they're people living into a diaconal life. MM looks outward – bringing the good news of God to those living on the margins – those outside our building. We lost one of our beloved members this year when Anita Collins went on to a nearer presence with God. She was faithful, hard working, and an inspiration for us all. MM has three mission partners that we work with. See reports on Abby's House, Dismas Farm, and the Mustard Seed elsewhere in this annual report as well as a full report of MM.

Fund raising for the feeding ministries is always a bit of a challenge. The Concert for the Hungry was a financial success. More importantly, it brought the outside community into our lovely space. I'm so thankful for the musicians who donated their talent and time. The sale of wreaths and greens was more successful than ever. And a bake sale that brings in almost \$2,000 – who does that? St. Francis does that.

My role as Archdeacon for the diocese continues. As such, I support the 14 ordained deacons in our diocese, keep track of our 3 students in Province 1 School for Deacons, assist and pray for the one soon ready for ordination, and find ways to make the diaconate more visible. We all meet in person several times a year, attend a weekend retreat together, and I take each deacon out to lunch on an annual basis. The most challenging part of the “job” is finding placements when deacons need to move to new parishes. I try to figure out where it will be a successful fit and then make recommendations to the bishop. Bishop Fisher gives the final word.

I am so thankful for St. Francis parish. It's a very good place. God loves each of us – we are his beloved. Whatever we do or don't do doesn't change the fact that God loves us. Keep the faith and share it as well.

In Christ, S. Jane Griesbach



## WARDENS' REPORT

At the end of 2022, we had identified two goals that we hoped to address in this current year: renewing our Youth Ministry and tending to some important property concerns. As a community, we have actively made progress in both of these areas and we are very grateful for those who have supported these efforts!

Christian formation for children and youth has always been something that we have valued at St. Francis. The general decline in church attendance followed by the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on our programs. It has also been several years since we have been able to include the salary for a youth minister in our budget. But 2023 saw some movement in a positive direction for both our Church School and Youth Group ministries. (See attached reports). While the growth may seem modest, we are aware that we are among a very small number of churches in our diocese that can report growth of any kind in this area. Our Vestry is committed to these programs, and we are grateful to all who support them: our clergy, staff, and volunteers as well as those who give of their time for special events. It is our hope that we will continue to see growth in these programs in the years to come!

Property concerns, as any home owner knows, are always with us. We are all exceedingly grateful for the diligent attention of Steve Henning, our property chairperson, to our daily building needs. However, there are projects that are well beyond the scope of volunteer responsibilities! Many of these have been put on the "back burner" due to a variety of factors including our budget limitations and the availability of contractors. However, in the past year we have made progress in either completing projects or taking the initial steps to address them. Our areas of focus have been on lighting, smoke detectors, fire alarms, trees and shrubs, and the ceiling on the porch of the rectory. Our list is still long and there are projects that can no longer be deferred. As good stewards, we must address these concerns and shore up our buildings and grounds for the future.

This year was also significant for a change in our worship schedule. The decision to discontinue the 5:00 PM Saturday service was not one that was easily made, and it was a source of sadness for many. Over the last few months, many who had attended the 5:00 service have found their way to either the 8:00 or 10:00 services on Sunday, and to the Adult Education programs that take place between those services. Their continued involvement has helped to strengthen and unify our community. Recently, a meeting was held to discuss our vision for music at the 10:00 service. This meeting included participants from both services including Beth, our minister of music, and some of the musicians who supported the 5:00 service. Ultimately, we all recognize that the purpose of liturgical music is to enhance our worship, nurture the spiritual growth of the members of our congregation, and glorify God. To that end, we are committed to working together in the coming year.

As we begin a new year, we are excited about the prospects for our vibrant faith community. It is our hope that everyone will find and share in the transformative opportunities at Saint Francis as we do the work God has given us to do.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Bastardo, Senior Warden  
Craig Stanovich, Junior Warden

## CHRISTIAN FORMATION

### **Church School**

The Church School program includes Christian Formation for children who are in preschool through fifth grade. Current enrollment: 22 students/15 families

January to June ('22-'23 school year)

- For the second half of the school year, church school continued to be offered in 2 age groups.
- Our lessons focused on the calling of the disciples, Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, parables, Easter and the story of Joseph.
- June 11th: Year-end party and "All Things Good" puzzle piece banner.

September – December ('23 -'24 school year)

- Church School continues to be offered during the 10:00 AM service. This year, church school is offered in 3 age groups.
- Families are able to register in person or virtually.
- This year's teacher and assistants as follows:
  - o Preschool & Kindergarten: Matt Surabian and Dave Currie (A), Jena DelCid and Addison Mellors (A)
  - o First and Second Grade: Alison Milan and Emma Milan (A), Jenn Christainsen and Graham Jensen (A)
  - o Third, Fourth and Fifth grade: Lisa Cherrier and Adeline Cherrier (A), and Kelly Manchester and Meghan Manchester (A).
- Our lessons for the first part of the year focused on Moses' story and the book of exodus. At our Advent Celebration, the children went through stations to re-tell and celebrate the story of the Nativity.
- The children participated in two mission/outreach projects so far during this school year. In November, we sponsored a food-drive for the Wachusett Food Pantry. In December, we purchased Christmas gifts for a 5 year old child who is involved with DCF.

### Eucharist Instruction

This spring, we are planning to run our Eucharist Instruction program. The program is primarily a home-program designed for students between the ages of 8-10.

**Thank you to our St. Francis community for supporting this program as teachers, assistants, volunteers, or parents who show their appreciation in so many ways!**

Amy Mellors  
Church School Coordinator

## **Adult Education Offerings**

Adult Education offerings during the year, 2023, were again anchored by our weekly Sunday Scripture Reflection series, which is offered at 9:00 a.m. (between the Sunday morning services) during the program year. The series follows the “Feasting on the Word” curriculum, offered through Westminster John Knox Press. The series follows the Scripture lessons of the Revised Common Lectionary schedule, which allows the group to explore one of the biblical lessons found in our Sunday worship service. Most of the sessions were led by the rector, but other people in the group occasionally led the discussion.

Beginning in the fall (October 2023), the “First Sunday Conversations” series was started again. The series was stopped in 2019 as the Sunday Scripture Reflection series was implemented. The Sunday morning schedule for adult education was modified to be more expansive: to have the monthly “First Sunday Conversations” held on the first Sunday, while the remaining Sundays of the month held the Scripture reflection. Topics covered during the fall included: Mission Ministries activities (October), Renewal Works overview and progress (November), and Helping Hands ministry activities (December). The conversation gatherings were well attended, with approximately 15-20 people at each gathering.

Additional adult education offerings were limited during the year: there were no seasonal studies (Lent or Advent) and the community did not have any candidates to receive Sacraments, therefore, no training was offered. There has been some interest in sacramental instruction and/or learning more about the Episcopal Church, so training may be offered in the Spring 2024.

Respectfully submitted,  
Patrick Perkins

## **Youth Ministry**

The year, 2023, started where the previous year ended; with a planning and implementation team (Joy Head and Patrick Perkins) working to design and develop ideas for a new Youth Ministry program. The team sent out communications to young folks and their parents, and received feedback that three youth would join us in the fall as we started our new program year. The plan for the Youth Group would be to meet twice per month: at least one meeting a month would follow a “conversation or event” format, while the remaining meeting of the month would follow a “teaching plan” format. The teaching plan would often be used to discuss important ideas or to go into greater depth regarding the group’s event: following a “faith seeking understanding” model. The Youth Group meets in the middle classroom on the second floor of the church building, and added some items to the room to help facilitate conversation, fellowship, and education.

The Youth Group met several times in the fall; celebrating our initial gathering, discussing All Saint’s Day, and other topics of interest. Our first event away from the church was a trip to Mesa Farm (thanks to Dale Perkins and Ann Tripp) to ride horses and discover how to care for God’s creatures. We look forward to additional discussions and events in the coming months, and invite all the Youth of the St. Francis community to join us!

Respectfully submitted,  
Joy Head and Patrick Perkins

## **WORSHIP MINISTRIES**

### **Acolytes**

The acolyte ministry slowly began to come back from its pandemic shutdown. The plan to invite people of all ages to this ministry continues, and we are very thankful to Shirley Blehar for her enthusiastic participation as an Acolyte! Shirley volunteered to serve during Bishop Fisher's visit and continued to serve during the Holy days and other times she was available. We hope to build on her great example and continue to invite new members of all ages to serve at the Sunday 10:00 a.m. worship service. If you are interested in joining the Acolyte ministry, please contact me or Patrick Perkins.

Respectfully submitted,  
Laura Caswell

### **Altar Guild**

The Altar Guild is an enjoyable and rewarding ministry. Members work behind the scenes to prepare for weekly services and decorate the church for the Christmas and Easter seasons. We are always looking for new members and invite both male and female members of the congregation to join us. The time commitment is just a couple of hours, once a month, working as part of a team.

We welcome, and would love to have additional members. If you think you might be interested talk to one of our current members. Work with a team for a week and see what is involved. It might be a way for you to get involved and make an offering of your time and talent to St. Francis.

We have a group of dedicated members that serve faithfully throughout the year. Many thanks to our current members: Roz Glanville, Dave Lucas, Lucy Nowak, Sharlene O'Connor, Carol Perkins, Mike Reno, Julie Russell, Carolyn Schmidt, Marje Sullivan, Marge Tremblay and Kim Whamond, for their ongoing commitment to the work of the Altar Guild. We added two new members this year - Welcome! Kari Currie and Jenny Sanders. Barbara Henning left the Altar Guild this year to concentrate on her other ministries. Thank you for your service Barbara.

Thanks also to Doug and Linda Rayworth for once again hanging the wreaths in perfect alignment for Christmas.

Respectfully submitted, Beverly Giarusso

### **Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Lay Readers**

Thank you to a wonderful group of dedicated individuals who read at each service and distribute the Eucharist to Holden Nursing Home residents every Sunday. This year we welcomed 2 new LEMS to our group!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Linda Shelton

## Music

The Music Ministry at St. Francis is composed of a medley of musical groups:

- The Sunday Choir meets every Sunday morning at 8:45a to rehearse the music selections for the 10:00a service.
- The Festive Choir performs on Christmas Eve and Easter morning and is open to all singers, including family and friends visiting for the holidays.
- The St. Francis Bell Choir, after about a two-and-a-half-year hiatus, resumed rehearsals under the leadership of Erik Gladwin in 2022-23. The group rehearses weekly on Wednesday evenings and performs at services around Christmas and Easter. Membership to the bell choir is open to all.

The choirs perform during the school year and take recess for the summer. All the musical groups are open to new members as well as new ideas for anthems and preludes. We encourage you to share your musical talents with the congregation. If you have an instrument that you want to play or a song that you want to sing, please let us know and we would be thrilled to add your gifts to the worship service. For example, on Christmas Eve we were blessed with Christmas Carols played by violinist Zophia Cherrier.

We will be engaging our organ technician Stefan Meier, to advise on the needed repairs for our historic Hook and Hastings pipe organ. We will begin work on a larger overhaul of the instrument in the summer recess.

It's an honor and joy for me to serve as your Minister of Music. I look forward to a new year of music and fellowship with you all!

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Keusch, Minister of Music

## Ushers

When you attend a St. Francis worship service, we hope one of the first persons you meet is an usher. Ushers aspire to create for all parishioners a sense of ownership in St. Francis – that is our mission. We do this by inviting you to worship, welcoming you, by name when we are able, and giving you the service bulletin and sometimes a hymnal. We also invite guests and visitors to worship with us, including introducing ourselves when we can and providing welcome packets to newcomers. Ushers are responsible for counting the attendance, bringing up the collection, and general straightening up the worship space after each service.

I would like to express my gratitude for all that Carolyn Schmidt, Beverly Giarusso, and John and Lucy Nowak have given to this ministry over the years. You are best!

Ushers are assigned to the 10:00 AM services as well as holiday and other special services. We invite everyone to usher ministry. If you are interested in serving in this very important ministry or just want to know a little more about it, see me or one of the ushers.

Craig Stanovich, Usher Coordinator

## COMMUNITY LIFE

### Finance

The increased faith-based positive efforts of the Saint Francis community and the continuing commitment of our dedicated clergy and lay leadership team during these times serves to define and form our mission in the world in which we live. The efforts and energies of all members of our community to generate and operate ministry programs that match the financial and “hands-on” commitments of our community are second to none.

The 2023 year-end Operating Statement benefitted from the generosity of our community exceeding pledge revenue by 5% over the 2023 Budget. Our 2023 reported pledge income totaled \$272,387 and exceeded Plan by over \$12,000. Revenue also benefitted from Bank interest on a CD due to increased interest rates available in the market. Overall; revenues exceeded Budget by over \$18,000.

Operating expenses totaled \$285,238 in 2023; a 3.9% increase over 2022. This was substantially less of an increase in expenses compared to the 2023 budget. Readying for some property maintenance projects and contractor scheduling challenges postponed some planned budgeted expenditures in 2023, resulting in reduced 2023 expenses. Hence, Operating Expenses came in at \$27,000 under budget. Again, economies continue to be realized by the Rector’s voluntary benefit choices. With the exception of some elevated utility costs, most expense categories came in below budget. When combined with the committed giving of the members of our community, St. Francis finished the 2023 year with a net deficit of (\$741.47) for the period.

In addition to the monetary contributions of the Mission Committee shown directly on our operating statement, the community continued to benefit from the many physical and spiritual contributions of our parishioners. In addition, the parish continues with financial support to Mission programs with funds committed to and donated directly to our mission partners but “passed through” our Balance Sheet. Hence, the additional fundraising efforts of our Mission Committee are to be applauded!

Our current balance sheet is healthy with total cash exceeding \$343,000 (\$213,706 in Checking and Money Market as well as \$129,473 in a CD). This does not include the \$132,500 (which includes Valuation Adjustments through September 2023) in the Mission and Ministry Fund\*\*.

The plan for 2023 provides a revenue forecast that is consistent with pledges in 2023 and includes a component for anticipated interest earnings on a Bank CD. The expense forecast is budgeted at a slight 0.23% decrease. This decrease is due to a strong negotiation and ultimate anticipated reduction in utility (specifically heating oil) expense due to our leadership diligently “locking –in” an aggressive oil commitment.

While 2023 brought some continued uncertainty into the lives of the members of the St. Francis community, some positives also emerged. Pledge commitments seem to be continuing to trend positive which is truly a blessing. That said, our plan tries to account for these “potentially level funded” pledge revenues with a very “hopeful” expense budget.

Our 2024 Budget is projecting a deficit of \$41,032.45. We are relying on a \$260,000 Pledge budget with slightly less than that confirmed at the time of this report and some anticipated pledges yet to respond. By including anticipated interest earnings on our Bank CD, budgeted revenues total \$270,650 or 1.69% increase over our 2023 budgeted revenue. The expense plan calls for \$311,473 in budgeted expenses; a \$713 decrease compared to 2023’s budgeted expenses.

Given our current cash position and the prayers that our growing parish will continue to respond spiritually and financially to the needs of our community, the Finance Committee feels that St. Francis can absorb this deficit in 2024.

Thanks to the support and guidance of Clergy, Lay Leadership, Staff and all the Ministers at St. Francis.

The Finance Committee  
Richard Delorme  
Roz Glanville  
Ann Tripp (Treasurer)  
Joel Wesson  
Chris Berglund

\*\* Account 1110; Trustees - DWM and Account; 1120 Mission and Ministry Asset Accounts reflect their market value at quarter ending September 2023.

## Stewardship

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace."*

1 Peter 4:10

The generosity of St. Francis members is truly amazing! We received pledge payments last year of over \$272,000 or \$12,000 more than the \$260,000 that has been pledged in 2023. What a remarkable testament to the support of our mission in bearing witness to Christ's love in the world.

Stewardship of our time, talents, and treasure is a ministry that is foundational to our faith and to the work of God's mission. Although an important part of Stewardship is inviting financial pledges from St. Francis members at the end of the church year, Stewardship at St. Francis is a year-round ministry.

One of the many goals of Stewardship is to educate. To that end, the October 2023 Little Portion featured a Stewardship article, including an explanation of a pledge and its importance to St. Francis. If you have questions on Stewardship, please contact me.

As of this writing, St. Francis has received 85 pledges for 2024 totaling more than \$244,000. Our average pledge is up to \$2,875.00 in 2024 from \$2,615 for 2022, with 35 able to increase their pledge from last year. We also hope to receive additional pledges from those who may still wish to pledge, but have not yet done so.

Craig Stanovich – Chair, Stewardship

## Memorial Garden

The garden adjacent to our worship space provides beauty and solace, a place to sit, pray and gather, as it bloomed and changed during the seasons. The primary purpose of the garden is to serve as a sacred burial space for the remains of those who wish to be interred there. The original garden was founded by parishioners in 1984 with the mission of providing a simple, economical burial space. In 2006 a significant renovation was undertaken by the parish to solve serious drainage issues and to create the current beautiful garden with stone walls, paved accessible pathways and teak furniture. The renovation expanded and simplified the available burial areas, which are all the areas covered by vinca.

The garden is available to all who wish to sit, meditate, pray, and gather. It has been a tradition to gather in the fall for our annual Parish Picnic. In honor of St. Francis Day, we gather and pray by name for each person who is at rest in the garden. The names of those persons are on the plaque boards in the back of the worship space next to the

door leading to the garden. For the Easter Vigil, weather permitting, we begin in the garden and light a fire from which our individual candles are lit. The garden supplies a beautiful setting for photos at special occasions in our parish life, such as our Bishop's parish visit this year!

The lay members of the Memorial Garden Committee are appointed from year to year by the Vestry, and with the Rector, are entrusted with the care and maintenance of the garden. The committee this past year consisted of Rev. Patrick Perkins, Beverly Giarusso, Kathleen O'Connor, Michael Pope and Carolyn Schmidt. The vestry liaison is Mary Cook.

A major goal for the year is to consider various aspects and language of the rules and regulations governing the garden, and to present to the Vestry for consideration.

Please speak with any of the members if you would like to volunteer for assisting with garden maintenance, or are interested in learning about serving in this ministry. There is no requirement that you be a "gardener"-there are many very ordinary tasks which go into keeping the garden beautiful.

Please speak with Fr. Pat if you are interested in learning more about the burial aspects of the garden. Please note that burial in the garden is open to all persons, regardless of parish membership.

The maintenance of the garden is ongoing throughout the year, but especially during the warmer months. This year the initial spring cleanup, pruning, disease prevention and irrigation closure was handled by Busy Bee Nursery (Busy Bee has been truly wonderful over the years in consistently getting this done before Easter). The ongoing lawn care and edging was handled by our parish lawn maintenance and occasional weeding by committee members, and a paid weeder hired to work an average of two hours per week. We had a change of the paid weeder mid-season this year. We have been fortunate to find reliable people for this necessary position. Beautiful potted flowers were planted by Lisa Marks of In Bloom Florist. The garden benefitted from the fall cleanup project. The Memorial Garden Board plaques were updated for accuracy and consistency, and several more will be installed in the early months of 2024.

Our parish property chair, Steve Henning, collaborated with the Memorial Garden Committee to assess current needs and to arrange for any needed maintenance. This year we will be assessing the need for replacement of certain sections of the retaining wall and solutions to some bare spots in the vinca. Garden expenses are funded by burial fees, donations and the Taylor Fund, created by a bequest of former parishioner, Martha Taylor, for the perpetual care of the garden. The parish dedicates the altar flowers once annually in honor of Martha Taylor and her husband, Warren Taylor, in gratitude for the gift of this fund.

Respectfully submitted, Kathleen O'Connor

### **Fellowship Ministry**

In 2023, all of our large hospitality events were back to pre-covid conditions, in both format and attendance. Thanks to our exceptional crew, the February Shrove Tuesday dinner went like clockwork, 60 people enjoyed plates of jambalaya or pancakes and sausages. Our annual "Welcome Back" picnic was held in September. It was a gorgeous day and a fun event attended by about 60 people. On October 21, Fellowship Hall was filled with music, laughter, and German food. For all who attended, our "Oktoberfest" was a wonderful celebration of our beloved St. Francis community! All of these events are only possible because of the many people who volunteer their time to set up, break down, shop, cook, and more. Taryn Surabian came on board to assist in the coordination of events. Coffee hour hummed along after the Sunday 10 am services thanks to the many people who graciously offered their time and baking skills to provide this hospitality to their fellow parishioners. We were happy to welcome four new families to our congregation in 2023.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dawn Rooke, committee member



## Prayer Shawl Ministry

2023 was the 18<sup>th</sup> year of this active ministry; fifty-five shawls were blessed. Founded and guided for many years by the late Beryl Turner, over that time the cumulative number of shawls is in the many hundreds. Included in the blessing in June was the final shawl made by Beryl. In her last days she was able to start another shawl but sadly she died before it was complete. Thank you to Susan Bastardo who took on the task of finishing that shawl.

All are welcome to take part in and distribute this ministry! Prayer shawls (appropriate, as the blessing says, for both tough times and times of joy) fly off the shelves at St. Francis. Additional hands are encouraged and needed, knitters and crocheters. Yarn and instructions are available. Members of the group will get newcomers started and/or provide a refresher course.

The fellowship of gathering to work on shawls occurs on the third Monday of the month (10:00 am-12:00 noon), twelve months of the year. Some parishioners work at home and drop off beautiful shawls in the “to be blessed” basket in the narthex. A fabric tag indicating that the shawl was made by the prayer shawl crafters is sewn on every shawl.

Thank you to all who knit and crochet to support this ministry.

Respectfully submitted, Barbara Henning

## Senior Ministry

In 2023, participants in this Ministry adopted the theme “*Growing older is inevitable, aging is optional*” as the framework for its’ activities. This belief became the foundation and reasoning for the development and planning of programming encouraging everyone to be active, physically and mentally, and to take personal direction for what takes place in their lives as they move ahead in years.

Discussion in the 2023 gatherings held on the second Thursday of each month, September through June from 10 a.m. to 12 noon also resulted in a decision to adjust the label for this Ministry to Daytime Fellowship (sponsored by Senior Ministry). It is hoped that more participants will be encouraged to attend gatherings with this change.

During 2023, a variety of activities occurred, many devoted to planning for the year. Included in each was a sharing and conversation time as well as light refreshments.

- Providing Coffee Hour after 10 a.m. Sunday Service in January
- February presentation of Senior Ministry in the Little Portion
  - Agreement that December Advent Luncheon should be repeated.
- March: Planning for trip to Worcester Art Museum on a Sunday afternoon.  
(planned for May, but cancelled as a program at the Museum resulted in parking issues)
- April: Group luncheon in June to be on a Wed. June 7<sup>th</sup> at Pine Croft Dairy as support for Mission Food Ministry.
- September: *a new approach to planning activities*: proposed programming was completed through June, 2024. Schedule is located on the Bulletin Board in Fellowship Hall (also a new component of this Ministry, structured to make upcoming activities known to everyone.)
  - In October, Sue Bastardo, Vestry Senior Warden held an open discussion about the Vestry purpose and activity.
  - November: devoted to planning for the Advent Luncheon on December 7<sup>th</sup>.
  - December 7<sup>th</sup>: Advent Luncheon: Luncheon provided by Ministry participants. 28 attended.

Thank you to all participants in this Ministry.  
Marge Tremblay, Coordinator

## **Update on status of AED (automated external defibrillator)**

The AED continues to be important to St. Francis. Recent articles describe the value of an AED within church settings. Further support has been given by news reports of lives saved because of the availability of this device.

2024 will bring an opportunity to learn, or to refresh skills.

The important battery component was updated in December, 2023, as its' warranty of 4 years from installation expired. Battery valid until 2027.

Supervision for this important device continues to be the responsibility of the "AED Team" which meets periodically to discuss status and plan for training programs. During 2023, James Emard agreed to share coordinator activities with Marge Tremblay.

Marge Tremblay and James Emard

## **Property**

Chair: Steve Henning; Members: Pat Perkins, Bryan Diehl, Joel Wesson, Matt Surabian, Richard Dixon  
Additional members are needed!

The following items were undertaken and/or considered. Priorities needed to be determined. Stewardship of our buildings and grounds is an ongoing responsibility.

### **Special projects**

- 1) Outside cleanups were conducted on October 28 and December 2 – many thanks to all who participated in this endeavor especially to Matt Surabian and Ann Trip for hauling away loads of debris. Holden Landscaping vacuumed up the leaves that were piled up in the corner of the parking lot.
- 2) Church boiler was repaired by Brideau Energy for 2 separate problem a) Pump for pulling oil into the heating units was replaced with a less complicated system, and b) – expansion tanks, zone motor and pressure relief valve were replaced along with purging the system of air.
- 3) Thermostats – 4 thermostats were replaced with identical models except for the office and Nave. This enables a consistent setup when it comes time to change the settings (usually twice a year). It is asked that anyone raising the temperature on a thermostat to make sure the thermostat is then set back by pushing the RUN button.
- 4) Heating oil contract for the 2023/2024 heating season with Brideau Energy – cost is considerably less than 2022/2023.
- 5) Overhead light outside ladies restroom was removed and replaced with LED light fixture
- 6) Overhead lights in kitchen were removed and replaced with new LED fixtures. Thanks to Matt Russell (electrician). Light bulbs in nursery room were replaced with 4' LED bulbs – ballasts were removed and disposed.
- 7) Nave lighting was upgraded with new LED bulbs and extenders
- 8) Lighting consultant was hired to submit plans for upgrading lighting above the altar and Fellowship Hall
- 9) Fire alarm service was changed from Knights Alarm to Horizon Alarms. All the smoke detectors throughout the entire building were checked that they were operational.
- 10) Sump pump in the basement of St. Clare house stopped working and there was 3-4 inches of water on the floor. Plumber was called in and a temporary pump was installed, and plans are to upgrade the pump and the discharge piping.
- 11) The rectory front porch ceiling was enclosed with new paneling and then painted.
- 12) New refrigerators for rectory and church kitchen
- 13) Book lending library was repaired.

14) New lawn and snowplow service (Holden Landscaping)

15) New pest control service (Gary's Pest B Dead)

**Deferred/temporary maintenance.**

**Year Ahead Plans**

- 1) The upper windows in Fellowship Hall need replacing or refurbishing – it has been noted that water during strong windy rainstorms is now dripping out of the wallboard and into the inside of the building. It is looking like we will need to rebuild the wall, possible mold abatement, new windows.
- 2) Vestry is looking at replacing the carpeting.

**Suggestions/needs – please convey any concerns to the Property Committee**

**MINISTRY TO THE WORLD**

**MISSION MINISTRIES**

**“WE ARE GIVERS, BEARING WITNESS TO CHRIST’S LOVE.”**

There is no other way to begin this report, other than by whole heartedly thanking each and every member of this Congregation for their generosity throughout this year. As a ministry, we have focused on helping the homeless find comfort and food through donations of our time, talents and resources to our Mission Partners, Mustard Seed, Abby's House and Dismas Farm, as well as, other service organizations in our community. With your help, we have answered God's call to accompany the lonely and feed the hungry.

The St. Francis Mission Ministries provides parishioners with opportunities to serve and respond to the needs of our community and the world with compassion and love. As a group, our objective is to use the resources at our disposal to:

- Foster partnerships with local service organizations to provide projects and services in which parishioners can participate.
- Support local, national, and worldwide charities and service organizations that correspond with our call to serve.

This year, acknowledging the generosity of this parish and mindful of the economic impact of inflation, we expanded our outreach efforts into the Holden community and spread out, as well as, streamlined our fundraising events. With our Community Food Drive Program, we set up collection baskets in various Holden businesses to increase food donations. We combined our fundraising events with fellowship opportunities. In May, we sponsored a very successful concert entitled “Hungry for Music” and in June organized a luncheon at Pinecroft Dairy. Our Apple Pie sale and Mini Fair were replaced with a very well received Holiday Bake Sale.

This year, we exceeded our fundraising goal of \$5000, enabling us to continue to provide monthly meals for our Feeding Ministries, Mustard Seed and Dismas Farm. All three of our Mission Partners are extremely grateful for our St. Francis community.

In August we began posting a list of One-Time Volunteer Opportunities, giving parishioners a chance to donate their time and talents during our Mission events. Several people came forward to help as they were available without a long-time commitment.

The following additional opportunities to serve were offered and responded to by St. Francis parishioners:

- **St. Francis Food Drives:** We continued our monthly Food Drives, collecting food for the Mustard Seed, Abby's House, Dismas Farm, the Wachusett Food Pantry and Laundry Love. To make donating easier, we set up baskets in the Narthex and Fellowship Hall so that parishioners could contribute after services or during

office hours. We now have a Food of the Month and began a Community Food Drive Program placing collection baskets at Sweets and Java, Leominster Credit Union and Holden Nursing Home.

- **Collection for Aids Project Worcester:** We held a coat drive and collected loose change along with Dunkin gift cards to provide coffee for clients of this group.
- **Heifer Living Gift Market:** On Palm Sunday, donations were collected for Heifer Project International. The event included a live animal, coffee hour and a joint Mission and Church School event.
- **Hungry For Music:** Thanks to the hard work of Jane Griesbach and Erik Gladwin, we held a concert in May. Several parish and non-parish musicians and singers, donated their time and talents to make this concert a big success. The Nave was packed to the brim with concert goers, who were treated to a complimentary reception at the concert's conclusion. Attendees were asked to bring a food item with all proceeds benefitting our Feeding Ministries.
- **Special Collections:** Approximately \$5000 was donated during Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas for distribution to the Mustard Seed, Dismas Farm, Abby's House and Episcopal Relief and Development for the Middle East and for Earthquake Relief in Turkey and Syria.
- **Hope for Housing Cards** were sold to help the Worcester homeless or those about to become homeless. Parishioners donated cards to Abby's House, Mustard Seed and Aids Project Worcester, benefitting two organizations with one donation.
- **Mampong Babies Orphanage in Ghana:** \$700 in loose change was collected.
- **Pincroft Dairy Fundraiser:** Parishioners gathered for lunch and fellowship with 15% of profits being donated to our Feeding Ministries,
- **Holden Days Booth:** We put together a booth for this event with a theme of "Tackling Hunger." Several parishioners worked the booth, handing out magnets and bookmarks with information about our Food Drive Program, prizes and candy.
- **Holden Crop Hunger Walk:** Parishioners participated in the Walk once again this year with St. Francis continuing to be the mid-point of the walk and the Mustard Seed remaining one of the recipients of the local portion of donations.
- **Wreath Sale:** We sold wreaths and greenery to raise funds for our Feeding Ministries.
- **Holiday Bake Sale:** 24 parishioners baked cookies, cakes and sweetbreads and helped set up this festive event to raise funds for our Feeding Ministries.
- **DCF Wonderfund Collection:** We obtained the names and wish lists of 25 foster children of various ages from the Department of Children and Families, purchasing toys and clothing for them as Christmas presents.

By listening to God's call to help one another donations were given from our \$7500 Mission Budget as follows:

- \$1700 to Abby's House for their Spring Fundraising Campaign and the Annette Rafferty Strive to Thrive Program
- \$2225 to Mustard Seed for their general use and for gift cards for individuals dependent on their Food Pantry.
- \$1000 to Dismas for renovation of a fourth residence for program graduates staying on to work the farm and for gift cards during the Holidays.
- \$2500 to Episcopal Relief and Development for disaster relief in Turkey and Syria, Tennessee & Arkansas, and Maui; Famine Relief in South Sudan and War Time Relief in the Gaza Strip.
- \$75 to Crop Walk assessment.

Once each month in March through May, under the guidance of Esteban Loustaunau, we held installments in our 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Film/ Ted Talk Series, "**The Secret to a Happy Life: Lessons in Research.**" The series explored the secret to finding happiness in our very busy lives. A resounding theme in all three talks was the importance of our connections to other people. These talks were very well attended and included lively discussion led by parish members.

In addition to thanking all of you for your generosity there are many individuals who have worked very hard to accomplish all that is outlined herein. At the risk of leaving someone out, we will not name names. **We are extremely grateful to all who helped in any way.** I, personally, would be remiss if I did not thank our Mission members for their unwavering dedication to this Ministry. Those individuals are Mary Ann Barbato, Barbara Henning, Jane Griesbach, Karen Kappes, Esteban Loustaunau, Mary Jude Piglsley and Marge Tremblay.

We honor the memory of Anita Collins who passed away in November of this year. She was a devoted member of this Ministry and will be sadly missed.

**MOVING FORWARD IN 2024: 1) CO-CHAIR AND NEW MEMBERS:** We are looking for a co-chairperson to help organize our events and activities and new members with new ideas to help us serve our Mission Partners. If you like to fundraise and have new ideas of ways to help those in need, you would be a good fit for this ministry. These positions require only the time that you are able to give. I encourage you to speak to a Ministry member if you have questions. **2) NEW MEETING TIME:** We are moving our monthly meetings to the second Sunday of the month after the 11AM service. Meetings generally last 45 to 60 minutes. This is a great opportunity for anyone unsure if they want to join our ministry to get a taste of what we are all about. **IF INTERESTED CONTACT JULIE RUSSELL OR ANY MINISTRY MEMBER.**

Respectfully submitted by:  
Julie Russell, Mission Ministries' Chairperson

### Mustard Seed

St. Francis continues our fifty year tradition of serving a monthly hot meal to two hundred plus guests. Our guests are homeless individuals, veterans and neighbors of the Mustard Seed who are working but suffer from food insecurity.

The Mustard Seed Food Pantry is now serving 63 families and 20 to 30 individuals. A grant from Rachel's Table has expired, which had provided milk and eggs to the weekly bag of staples provided. Donations from the St. Francis monthly food drives are the only consistent collection of food items.

We are very grateful to Sweets & Java, the Leominster Credit Union and Holden Nursing Home for maintaining collection baskets to assist us with the ongoing need for food. Besides monthly food drives, St. Francis parishioners have been donating supermarket gift cards through Hope for Housing, which are greatly appreciated.

A first ever corporate donation was made in July thanks to the Milan family. An amazing selection of ice cream treats were provided to our delighted guests. The ice cream treats were also provided to the Mustard Seed Camp for second and third grade students.

The Mustard Seed received two large donations of quilts & quillows that were sewn by our St. Francis quilt guild and also donated to us by Cathy Racine's quilt guild at the Charlton Sewing Center. The quilts were all blessed by Father Pat and distributed to people in need of warmth.

The health clinic that was started in the basement of the Mustard Seed has finally re-opened. The city of Worcester provides a doctor and volunteers to tend to basic health needs for those who have no access to care.

We are continually thankful for the support of Julie Russell and the Mission Committee. Our monthly shoppers, Beth Carrigan, Laura Caswell & Cherly Lonardo. Our cooking teams, Nancy Rogan, Andi Coyler, Barbara Pezzini, Kathleen O'Connor, Tom Ritacco, Will and Carol Ames, Barabara Henning, Alison Milan & Donna McGrath. Fill in cooks, Tina Chen and Beth Carrigan. Our Serving teams, the Tripps, Bev Giarusso, Jen Stanovich, the Dixons, Carol Perkins, Kathy Suchenski, Catherine Nash, Tina Chen, Lynda Wyman and Peter Pope.

One of the most important parts of the dinner St. Francis provides is the homemade desserts. Our many thanks to all the wonderful bakers, Beth Carrigan, Laura Caswell, Lucy Nowak, Tom Ritacco, Sue Delorme, Barbara Henning, Alison Milan, John Carrigan and Tina Chen.

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Hebrews 13:1

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy L Pope

### **Dismas Family Farm**

Dismas Family Farm is a place where formerly incarcerated men find hope, work, and safety. They may live there for upwards of one year until they feel ready to large working farm, raising all sorts of vegetables. Chickens, sheep, goats, two adorable mini horses are residents of the farm, as well as two dogs and assorted cats. The men work the farm and staff farmer's markets at harvest time. Other means of support are selling Christmas trees and produce at the farm location.

I learned this year that the name of the thief crucified near Jesus, the one who repented and asked to be remembered in heaven, was Dismas. How appropriate! Between 10 and 13 men live at Dismas Farm at any one time. They apply through the courts to be part of program. There are always 2 supervisors on site as well.

St. Francis has four teams of people who rotate through the year and bring meals once a month. We sit down to eat and share conversation with the men. We asked them what they would most like for meals and the answer was anything but pasta. Our teams get mighty creative with the meals they bring. There has been chicken, Mexican lasagna, salmon, shrimp, etc. Sides, salads and dessert round out the meals.

One parishioner needed to step off a team this year. I asked for one volunteer from the congregation and got four people willing to do this work. Now they're all part of a team. Different organizations provide the evening meal throughout the week.

We give a Christmas present to the men in the form of a Walmart gift card. These are meant to help them buy needed things for themselves or to give as gifts to loved ones. They are always surprised and thankful.

This year, Dismas Farm purchased a nearby house paid for by grants and donations. Our Mission Ministries gave a small donation. After renovations, men who choose to stay at Dismas and work at the farm may stay for longer than one year.

Faithfully – S. Jane Griesbach

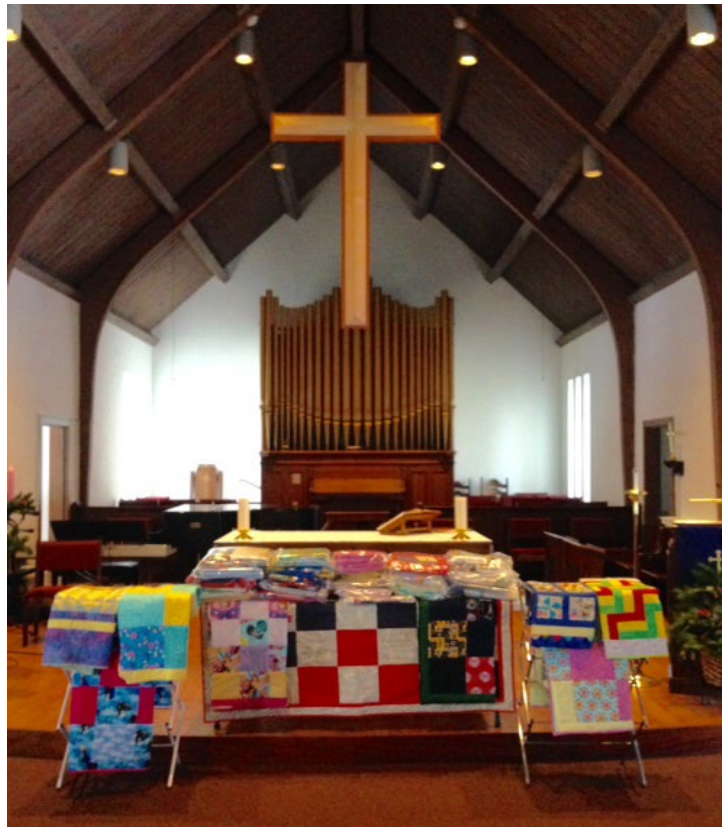
## Quilting at St. Frances, St. Clare Quilters

The St. Clare Quilters, who began working together in 2017, includes beginners to far more experienced quilters. The group designs and makes small quilts for donation. To date, approximately 225 quilts have been donated. The quilt designs are simple and small, cotton and flannel, intended for warmth and comfort. The group is grateful for generous fabric donations and completed quilts, and our personal stashes of fabric and quilts which allow this effort to continue. In 2023 the quilters received the first grant from the St. Francis Mission and Ministry Fund (\$1,000 for quilt batting). The group is grateful for help with this expensive but least visible part of a quilt!

During 2023 quilt recipients were Abby's House, the Mustard Seed guests, Afghan refugee families and victims of the wildfires on the island of Maui/Hawaii. The grant from St. Francis also covered the mailing cost for the quilts to Maui. The number of donated quilts was 60, enabled by donations of completed quilts from the Charlton Sewing Center (entrusted to us), a large number of quilts tops (from a wonderful friend of Deacon Jane) which we finished, those quilts we have made and several from personal donations. We are truly blessed with so many donations, which includes "long arm/top quilting" services done at no charge (by a friend of Sue Delorme) on several of our larger quilts.

The St. Clare quilters are Betty Clark, Sue Delorme, Susan Dresley, Bev Giarusso, Roz Glanville, Barbara Henning and Julie Russell. Newcomers, both to quilting and this group, are welcomed and encouraged!

Respectfully submitted, Barbara Henning



## 2024 Leadership Nominations

(Elected to serve one year term unless otherwise noted)

<u>SENIOR WARDEN</u>	Susan Bastardo
<u>JUNIOR WARDEN</u>	Craig Stanovich
<u>CLERK</u>	Dawn Rooke
<u>TREASURER</u>	Joel Wesson
<u>VESTRY:</u> Three-year terms	Ann Tripp and Jeremy Sanders (terms expire 2027)
<u>DIOCESAN CONVENTION DELEGATES:</u>	Dick Delorme, Susan Bastardo, Dawn Rooke
<u>DIOCESAN CONVENTION ALTERNATES:</u>	Craig Stanovich and Bev Giarusso

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

#### Vestry:

Term expires 2025:	Mary Cook and Joy Head
Term expires 2026:	Tina Chen and Matt Surabian
Retiring:	Mary Jude Pigsley and Richard Dixon

#### Memorial Garden: Appointed

Term expires 2025:	Carolyn Schmidt
Term expires 2026:	Beverly Giarusso
Term expires 2027:	Kathleen O'Connor
Term expires 2028:	Michael Pope
Retiring:	None

#### COMMITTEES

Finance.....	Chris Berglund
Mission Ministries.....	Julie Russell
Newcomers.....	Dawn Rooke / Taryn Surabian
Property.....	Steve Henning
Stewardship.....	Craig Stanovich
Memorial Garden.....	Kathleen O'Connor
Atlar Guild.....	Bev Giarusso
Ushers.....	Craig Stanovich
Readers/LEMs.....	Linda Shelton
Acolytes.....	Laura Caswell

#### CHAIRPERSONS



**Vestry Officers:** *The following list of names will be presented to be elected to terms as defined in the note on page 26.*

**Senior Warden: Susan Bastardo**

Susan grew up in Seekonk MA and was raised in the Roman Catholic church. She and her family (husband Michael, son Joe, daughter Jena) started attending St. Francis when they moved to Holden in 1990. Soon after joining she volunteered to be a Sunday School teacher. She was received into the Episcopal church in 1992 and was hired as the Church School Coordinator in 1994. She joyfully served in that position for twenty-five years. During that time, she completed the four-year Education for Ministry program and served as a mentor for several confirmands. Her involvement in these ministries provided experiences and led to relationships that helped deepen her faith and strengthen her connection to the St. Francis community. She appreciates the opportunity to learn more about the many ministries of St. Francis while serving as Senior Warden.

**Junior Warden: Craig Stanovich**

Jennifer and I have been members of St. Francis since 2000. I was received at St. Francis into the Episcopal Church in 2004. Both of our children, Chelsea and Nicholas, have participated in Church School as well as both being confirmed at St. Francis. After previously serving on the Vestry, and also serving as both Junior and Senior Warden, I have had the privilege of chairing Stewardship for the last several years. In addition, in conjunction with our Rector, I was honored to lead an outstanding RenewalWorks mission team – focusing on the importance of spiritual growth at St. Francis. I have also been a member of the Vestry since 2020 and have served as the Usher Coordinator for the last decade. As an Usher Coordinator, it has been my pleasure to greet St. Francis members at the 10:00 AM service as well as welcome visitors. I am honored to again be nominated for the Junior Warden as the faith community of St. Francis is a vital part of my life. My hope is to continue to welcome and invite folks into participating in our ministries so that they, too, can experience the blessings that have been bestowed on me at St. Francis.

**Clerk: Dawn Rooke**

Dawn and her husband Brian have lived in Holden since 1990 and have attended St. Francis since 1991. They feel blessed to have been able to raise their three children in this wonderful church that places such a strong emphasis on supporting, nurturing and honoring its youth. During her years at St. Francis, she has been involved with the Newcomer/Fellowship Committee, Dismas Farm Ministry, and served four years on the vestry. She is currently serving as a convention delegate and has been the clerk of the vestry since 2006. She looks forward to continuing to serve the St. Francis parish.

**Treasurer: Joel Wesson**

Joel Wesson and Lisa Nicholas moved to Holden in November of 2022 from Mississippi, when we joined St Francis. Joel is a lifelong Episcopalian and has been Sr. Warden, Jr. Warden, and Treasurer for many years at St Paul's Episcopal Church in Picayune, Mississippi. He was also a choir member and Lay Eucharistic Minister at St Paul's. He is a member of the bell choir here. He has also been active in the Men's Saturday Morning workdays and has joined the Finance Committee and an ad hoc lighting committee. He has also worked with Steve Henning this year on some building maintenance items. Since August, Ann Tripp has been re-introducing Joel to Quickbooks accounting and the Treasurer's responsibilities.

**Vestry:**

*The following list of name presented to serve three-year terms:*

**Ann Tripp**

Ann Tripp and her family have been a part of the St Francis community since they moved to Rutland about 30 years ago. She was a Sunday school teacher for about 10 years while her children were active in the program and for several years after. Ann has also been on the Finance Committee and Stewardship Committee. Ann and her family are best known for bringing Ali the donkey to Palm Saturday and several sheep and goats to the Christmas pageant every year. Ann's day job is President of Opus Investment Management and Chief Investment Officer for The Hanover Insurance Group, Inc. ("THG"), the parent company of Opus, as well as the company's operating subsidiaries where she has oversight of the portfolios managed by Opus or third-party managers for affiliated and non-affiliated accounts. She also serves on boards and sub-committees of area non-profit organizations, including Fallon Community Health Plan and the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts.

**Jeremy Sanders**

Jeremy was born and raised near Clemson, South Carolina. He grew up in the Baptist tradition, and as a young adult was involved in teaching and leadership within his church. Jeremy and his wife, Jenny, found the Episcopal Church several years ago when invited by a friend. They moved to Massachusetts in 2020, and landed in Princeton later in the year. As the pandemic eased, they found a church home at St. Francis. Now Jeremy serves as a reader for the 8 am service and Jenny serves on the altar guild.

**Diocesan Convention:** *The following list of names will be presented to serve 1 year terms*

**Dick Delorme**

My wife and I have been members of St. Francis for 25 years. I was Junior Warden and then Senior Warden during Rich's first four years at St. Francis. I then served as Treasurer for four years. I participated in the election of Doug Fisher as our Bishop. The ministry-oriented culture and spiritual aliveness of St. Francis are what make me want to continue serving in my current capacity. I also want to participate in guiding the diocese in the direction that Bishop Fisher wants to take us.

**Susan Bastardo: see bio above**

**Dawn Rooke: see bio above**

**Diocesan Convention Alternates:** *The following list of names will be presented to serve 1 year terms*

**Craig Stanovich: see bio above**

**Bev Giarusso**

Bev is a lifelong Episcopalian and has been a member of St. Francis since the days when services were held in the yellow house. During her years at St. Francis she has taught Sunday school, shopped for Mustard Seed, worked annually on the church fair, served on the vestry, served as warden and helped a group of teenagers build the labyrinth in the back yard of St. Clare House. Currently she is co-director of the Altar Guild, is involved in the nursing home ministry, works with the quilters, and ushers at the Saturday service. She is now retired after 35 years as a Middle School math teacher in the Worcester Public Schools. Bev lives in West Boylston with her husband Vincent – also a WPS retiree. Their family includes a son Richard, daughter-in-law Allison and grandson Adrian.

## **Basic Responsibilities of the Vestry**

The responsibility of the Vestry, like that of the governing body of any organization, is to:

- † Help define and articulate the mission of the congregation;
- † Support the mission by word and deed;
- † Select the rector;
- † Ensure effective organization and planning;
- † Ensure adequate resources in leadership and in financial stewardship;
- † Manage resources effectively;
- † Determine that appropriate programs, policies, and procedures have been developed and are followed;
- † Assess its own performance

The success of a congregation is not measured in terms of numbers of members or size of the endowment, but rather in the degree to which it is working toward the fulfillment of the mission of the Church.

*(From "What Is A Vestry/" Publication of Cornerstone, Episcopal Church Foundation)*

2023 Financial Information - Page Intentionally Left Blank. For financial information, please contact the church office.