

# Saint Mary's Episcopal Church

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023



ANNUAL MEETING  
JANUARY 28, 2024

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### **Prayer for the Parish**

Almighty and ever living God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

### **Prayer for the Meeting**

Almighty and ever living God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel in the annual meeting of St. Mary's Church 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.*

## Table of Contents

	<u>PAGE</u>
Agenda .....	3
Constitution and Canons .....	4
2022 Annual Meeting Minutes .....	5
Report of the Nominating Committee – Robert Foltz.....	6
Nominees .....	6
<b>Annual Reports</b>	
Senior Warden – Robert Foltz.....	8
Junior Warden – Chester Phillips III.....	9
Treasurer’s Report – Kathleen Palaia .....	10
Financial Commission Report; Treasurer’s Report; 2022 Year-End Financials	
Endowment – Hilton Jervey.....	14
Stewardship – Joanna Wragg.....	14
Assistant Priests.....	14
Christian Formation – Rev’d Gail Tomei .....	16
Youth and Family Ministres – Nancy Vaughn.....	16
Library Report – Diane Dearth .....	17
Communications – Joanna Wragg.....	18
Worship – Ian Mitchell .....	19
Music – William Elliott.....	20
Outreach – Paul Scheible .....	21
Pastoral Ministries – Yolanda Naimoli.....	22
Daughters of the King.....	23
Episcopal Church Women – Betty Folkerth- Judy Phillips .....	23
PennyWise – Paul Scheible.....	26
Membership.....	26
Listing of Staff & Vestry .....	27
Calendar of Dates.....	28

## Agenda

### **2023 Annual Meeting of the Members of St. Mary's Episcopal Church of Bonita Springs, Inc**

**Sunday, January 28, 2024**

The Annual Meeting will take place in the Parish Hall after the 10 AM Eucharist

The agenda for the meeting is as follow:

1. Call to Order
2. Opening prayer.
3. Approval of the Minutes for the 2023 Annual Meeting
4. Report of the Nominating Committee
5. Election of new Vestry members
6. Appointment of the Senior Warden
7. Expression of thanks to retiring vestry member
8. Report of Senior Warden
9. Report of the Rector
10. Report of the Treasurer
11. Questions from members and discussion
12. Closing Prayer
13. Adjournment

Please note:

The new Vestry will meet immediately after the adjournment of the Annual Meeting in the Library.

# The Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Southwest Florida

## CANON VII

### Congregational Governance

**Section 1. Annual Meeting.** A Congregation shall hold an annual meeting every year. Unless otherwise specified in the Congregation's bylaws, the annual meeting of the Congregation shall be within one hundred twenty (120) days before or on the twenty-eighth (28th) day of February.

**Section 3. Electors.** a. As used in these Canons, an elector is a lay communicant member of a Congregation who is sixteen (16) years of age or over, whose name is duly enrolled as such in the Register of the Congregation, who is regular in attendance at divine services, and who makes stated contributions of record to the general support of the Congregation. A qualified elector of a Congregation is entitled to vote in all congregational elections and on all matters that come before the Congregation for a vote.

**Section 4. Congregational Council.** a. Each Congregation shall have a congregational council, which may be called a vestry or board of trustees or similar name, according to the choice of the Congregation. To be qualified to serve on the congregational council, a person must be an elector of the Congregation and eighteen (18) years of age or older.

**e. Wardens.** The Congregation's bylaws shall provide for the selection of wardens of the Congregation. The Congregation's bylaws shall provide that the term of office for the wardens is one (1) year, and that a person may not serve as a warden for more than three (3) consecutive terms. Unless otherwise provided in the bylaws, the selection of wardens shall take place at the first meeting of the congregational council after a congregation's annual meeting, as follows:

1. The member of the clergy in charge shall appoint one (1) member of the congregational council to serve as the Senior Warden. If the Congregation does not have a member of the clergy in charge, the members of the congregational council shall select the Senior Warden in the same manner as it selects the Junior Warden.
2. The members of the congregational council shall select one (1) member of the congregational council to serve as the Junior Warden. Unless otherwise provided in the bylaws, the selection of the Junior Warden shall be by majority vote of the members of the congregational council.

**f. Officers.**

1. The congregational council shall annually select a secretary, who need not be a member of the Congregation. The secretary shall ensure that the minutes of congregational council's proceedings are taken and reported, attest to the public acts of the Congregational council, preserve all records and papers belonging to the Congregation, perform such other duties as shall be legally assigned, and faithfully deliver into the hands of a successor all books and documents of the Congregation that may be in the secretary's possession.
2. The congregational council shall annually select a treasurer, who need not be a member of the Congregation, to perform the duties incumbent upon that office. The treasurer shall furnish a bond of suitable amount. The books and accounts shall be audited annually and at any other time the congregational council may direct. The offices of secretary and treasurer may both be held by the same person.

## Annual Meeting Sunday, January 29, 2023

.....  
The Parish of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Bonita Springs  
.....

.....  
Diocese of Southwest Florida  
.....

**Call to Order:** Father Wright led us in opening prayer for the Parish.

**Approval of Minutes for the January 2022 Annual Meeting:** A motion to approve was made, seconded, and adopted by acclamation.

**Report of the Nominating Committee and Election of new Vestry Members:** Bob Foltz and the Nominating Committee consisting of David Bergquist, Joan Croteau, Bob Foltz and Rick Velde nominated four persons for the Vestry: Bob Foltz, Gail Goggin, Paul Greene and Renee Osborne. A motion was made and seconded to accept the nominations and the above four members of the Parish were elected to the Vestry.

**Senior Warden:** Father Wright appointed Bob Foltz as Senior Warden for the year 2023.

**Retiring Vestry Members:** David Bergquist, Joan Croteau and Rick Velde were recognized and thanked for their service over the past three years.

**Report of the Rector:** Father Wright stated that he is blessed by the amazing work in the church as demonstrated through incredible worship, the meeting of community needs through the many outreach efforts, growing church fellowship through the multitude of programs, the many ministries, the finest clergy staff and the steadfast work of the Vestry.

Each day the church is growing from great to greater. He would like to invite more people to be a part of this enlightened church. He is thankful for all the hard work of each member.

**Report of the Senior Warden:** Bob Foltz spoke on the state of the Parish:

- We are a holy, devout and growing Parish with an improved spiritual condition which is palpable.
- Our Parish is recovering from Covid 19 and Hurricane Ian.
- If the spiritual foundation is right the financial condition will follow. Bob praised Kathleen for her hard work on the Parish finances.

Bob states that he is happy for our parish and happy to be the Senior Warden.

**Report of the Treasurer:** Father Wright introduced Kathleen Palaia, Treasurer, and stated that the amount of work that she has done is incredible. The Vestry set a high bar of demanding clear and understandable financial statements. We now have accurate and clear financial statements. Kathleen stated that she took over in May and began by saying that we are not a wealthy parish. We have worked hard to strive for a balanced budget but there are expenses which exceed income. We need plate and pledge contributions to keep running. The numbers are real, not guesstimates. There have been no increases in salaries, no bonuses for the staff but dental benefits have been added. The accountant position has been eliminated. Father Bill Faupel's salary has been paid for by an anonymous donor. There is no budget for the choir but is funded separately with a separate financial drive. The Diocesan assessment has increased by thirty-three percent. Personnel costs are the majority of the financial spending and we are in line with other churches in Southwest Florida. We continue to give back to the community through Outreach efforts. The challenges for the coming year include:

- Growing our church.
- Striving to increase the average pledge to greater than \$5000 plus.
- Capturing streaming members to contribute to the church.
- More volunteers needed.
- Contributions needed for the endowment to save for the future.

Kathleen Palaia concluded her comments by thanking the Finance Committee and all their contributions and suggestions.

Father Wright concluded the meeting with a heart felt thank you to all the church staff and the lay staff.

Questions were invited and short discussion followed. Father Wright led the Parish in a concluding prayer. Meeting was adjourned.

## Annual Meeting 2024

### Report of The Vestry Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee for the 2024 Annual Meeting consisted of Chester Phillips, Diane Dearth and Bob Foltz. The Committee is nominating four parishioners to be elected at the Annual Meeting to serve on the Vestry for three-year terms. The Vestry was advised of the nominations at its meeting on November 21, 2023.

The four nominees are: Nelson Burr, Joan Croteau, Jack Sites and Ron Westrom.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Foltz,

Senior Warden and Chairman of the Nominating Committee

### Nominees



Joan Croteau

I began attending Episcopal services in 1969 after Paul and I had an Ecumenical marriage ceremony.

It was not until we moved to CT that we began exclusively Episcopalian, attending Saint Peter's on the Green in Monroe, CT. Eventually, I was received into the Episcopal Church in July of 1989, the same day our son was confirmed. It was a joyful family occasion. Two years later, another son was confirmed. Our daughter was earlier baptized in this parish.

While at Saint Peter's, I served as a Lay Eucharistic Minister, ECW president, Director of Saint Peter's Nursery School, youth advisor, and Sunday and Bible school teacher. It was a small parish and everyone wore many hats.

In 1993, we moved to Shrewsbury, MA and our family became members of Trinity Episcopal Church. As a Eucharistic minister, I visited many parishioners unable to attend services. I served on an Ecumenical Covenant Committee and organized many fellowship events between local

parishes. On Vestry, I became Junior Warden, and then Senior Warden (during an Interim period).

In 2013, Paul and I moved to Bonita Springs and became members of Saint Mary's Episcopal Church. I became a member of the Christian Formation Committee. At Saint Mary's, I became a member of the Order of Saint Luke. I am actively involved in following the Rule of Life, including ministry at Prayer Stations, Prayers of Hope, and study. I serve as a Co-Convener of OSL. I am also a member of the Pastoral Care Committee. I have served on Vestry during our Interim period. And now with parish blessing, I hope to serve as Junior Warden.

During each summer, Paul and I spend a few months in Maine where two of our children currently reside. We attend Saint David's Episcopal Church in Kennebunk, ME.

Paul and I have been married for 54 years and have been blessed with four children. Professionally, I have been a lifelong educator.



Jack Sites

John E. (Jack) Sites was born in Ohio and received his education in Ohio and Florida. He attended and received degrees from the University of Florida, Appalachian State University and University of Miami. Additional (graduate study) was undertaken at Carnegie-Mellon University. He is a career international higher education administrator and accreditation practitioner and consultant, having moved to Florida to help start Ave Maria University. He is a life-long Episcopalian and occupied a variety of service positions at previous parishes of which he was a member. He has been a member of this congregation for 20 years and previously served on the Vestry. He is married to Sara Wilson Sites, they have four children and nine grandchildren.



Ron Westrom

- Born in Aurora, IL, a suburb of Chicago.
- Spent most of life in the Chicago area.
- Received BSBA degree from Elmhurst College in IL.
- Met wife Leona (Lee) at Elmhurst College.
- Served as an officer in the US Army.
- Stationed in Korea.
- Flew on the Honor Flight.
- Was Human Resources Manager for Illinois Tool Works.
- Was on the vestry of St. John Episcopal Church in Mt. Prospect, IL.



- Moved to Naples as snowbirds in 2013.
- Became full-time Naples residents in 2019.
- Became members of St. Mary's in 2013.
- Used to sail.
- Was commodore of the George Williams College Yacht Club in Lake Geneva, WI.
- Used to golf.
- Have 3 children (2 daughters & a son).
- Have 8 grandchildren.
- Have 8 great grandchildren.



Nelson Burr

Nelson was born in Burlington New Jersey and was baptized at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Burlington, NJ. He attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and was ordained in the Baptist faith in 1983. Nelson pastored churches in Texas and New Jersey and was the Chaplain for a hospital in New Jersey. Moving to Florida he worked in the financial industry and is now retired. Nelson joined St. Mary's In 2021 and currently serves as Chairman of the Membership Committee directing the Coffee Hour and the Greeters. He is also currently serving on the Vestry.

### **Report of the Senior Warden C. Robert Foltz**

The year of our Lord 2023 was yet another significant year for St. Mary's.

Our parish is flourishing as a Christian community, and we are growing in our faith. I believe that this is happening for a number of reasons.

*The Strength of the Holy Spirit.* All that we do or achieve as Christians comes from God, and we would not be where we are now without the guidance and prompting of the Holy Spirit. Our faith is our foundation for our works, and our faith is strong and ever growing. Our weekly worship is key.

*The Strength of our Clergy.* Father Ryan has hit his stride as our Rector. He has learned to work effectively with our Commissions and his preaching is outstanding. Mother Gail and Father Bill provide important services to us in the areas of education and leadership. The three are a great team, and we are blessed to have them.

*The Strength of Our Commissions.* Our Catechism provides that "the ministers of the Church are lay persons..." This is certainly true of St. Mary's, where the ministry of the laity is expressed in our Vestry, our Altar Guild and our twelve separate Commissions, each charged with various responsibilities in our parish. Just to name them gives an idea of the wide scope of their work: Christian Formation, Communications, Episcopal Church Women, Endowment, Facilities Management, Finance, Membership, Outreach, Pastoral Ministry, Penny Wise, Stewardship and Worship.

We are really humming, and I am sure that the Good Lord is pleased with us.

This has also been another great year for me in serving as your Senior Warden. Let me say again how honored I am to serve. I love my faith; I love this parish; and I love my job.

God bless us one and all.

*Respectfully submitted,*

Bob Foltz,  
Senior Warden

## **Report of The Junior Warden Chester A. Phillips III**

### **Facilities Commission**

Paul Scheible, Paul Croteau, Bruce Rydbeck, Ron Westrom, John Martindale

The Junior Warden is a member of the Vestry who is elected by the Vestry to this position for a one-year term from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting. Responsibilities include serving as an executive second to the Senior Warden and serving as the Facilities Manager for the church. Duties include repairs, maintenance, and new projects as well as approving many of the church bills for payment.

It is important to realize that St. Mary's has a large physical plant relative to the size of our congregation: 5 acres of land and 3 large buildings, the newest of which is the Parish Hall which is almost 25 years old, and a large, paved parking lot. There are 12 individual HVAC units. The Buildings and Grounds budget is constrained, and it is regrettable that a number of maintenance items were not scheduled because we have no budget money to pay for them. For example, washing the windows, or trimming the large number of trees around the property, a more frequent cleaning of the carpet in the Parish Hall. The locks on the front doors of the church are damaged and difficult to lock and unlock – they really need attention or replacement if funds become available. The Parish Hall needs a coat of paint and the carpet on the floor needs to be replaced with new flooring.

Our goals for 2023 were to remain in budget while we attempt to route storm water away from the foundation of the church building.

We were able to add a new storm water drainage system to the east side of the church building which drains very efficiently into a catch basin which in turn drains into the wetlands behind the church. While working in this area we were able to replace gutters and replace rotten fascia boards. With this new system in place we do see two smaller areas east side that still need drainage attention – especially the north-east corner of the building where we need gutters, downspouts and some way of routing the water away from the building, and one small area beside the Labyrinth where we need to add a catch basin.

We also worked on the west side of the church building where water was forming a pond next to the church building and roots from a magnolia tree and hedges were undermining the foundation of the building. Utilizing the Rector's vision for a memorial garden behind the pavilion, we were able to have the memorial stone moved into this proposed garden area behind the pavilion, have the magnolia tree and all hedges removed from the west side of the building, and have it all replaced by grass with a narrow border of river rock next to the church building. The downspouts on the west side of the church are now routed into the general storm drainage system of the church.

A leak in the roof at the back of the church was discovered and one small section of roof was completely replaced. Note that the whole metal roof is 25 years old and will be coming to end of life in the not too distant future.

The roof was also replaced on the storage shed behind the buildings – there were actual holes in the old roof.

The main fire panel in the church building failed and was replaced.

All the ceiling light fixtures in the Narthex have been replaced.

The church has a beautiful new sign in front thanks to generous donations of a parishioner and the supervision of our Parish Administrator, Ian Mitchell.

Finally there were numerous small but necessary maintenance and repair tasks such as toilet flush valve replacements, ceiling light fixture replacements, continuing light bulb replacement with LED bulbs, parking lot light repairs, rehab and painting of outdoor benches were completed – often utilizing donated parts and labor.

The goal is to have church buildings and grounds that function properly and safely as well as to support our goals of worship and fellowship. In addition it is important to have buildings and grounds that exude care and pride to attract new church members. We were able to accomplish a lot in 2023, but many necessary and / or desirable maintenance tasks remain.

### **Treasurer's Report for 2023 – Kathleen N. Palaia**

#### **Finance Commission Report**

The Finance Commission serves to assist the Treasurer and the Vestry on Church financial matters. The commission members are Kathleen Palaia (treasurer and chair), Wendy Scheible, Chris Davies, Sandra Renner and Carolyn Saxton. We met six times this year and focused on:

Developing a balanced budget for 2024.

Reviewing our monthly financial position.

Review the several bequests realized this year.

#### **Treasurer's Report**

This year we finished the year with a surplus of \$32,000 but this included \$37,000 taken from general endowment fund.

Also, this year the salary of Fr. Faupel was met with a generous gift from a parishioner.

The annual Diocesan Assessment was lowered by 15% this past year.

We have not paid any expenses for the choir in this budget. The choir was paid for solely by parishioners who donated to “Music Angels”.

Outreach donations from St Mary's were the direct result of donations from Penny Wise. Over \$85,000 was spent on Outreach contributions this past year.

#### **Budget 2024**

The Vestry has approved a budget that is not in balance but is realistic. The deficit we show this year is only \$11K, this is a marked improvement from last year's budget.

We have given staff increases for the first time in two years.

We terminated the employment of a full-time staff member and hired a cleaning company to take on cleaning responsibilities. We will need to hire some contract employees this year.

Audit, accounting, and other financial jobs have been absorbed within the organization eliminating outside resources.

<b>Financials for 2023</b>			
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
<b>Revenues</b>			
Pledges	\$ 510,782	\$ 475,000	\$ 35,782
Plate	\$ 123,086	\$ 133,000	\$ (9,914)
Endowment	\$ 37,000	\$ 37,000	\$ -
Pennywise	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ -
Other Income	\$ 17,270	\$ 12,500	\$ 4,770
Released from Restrict	\$ -	\$ 30,000	\$ (30,000)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 718,138</b>	<b>\$ 717,500</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>			
Clergy Salary-Benefits	\$ 203,540	\$ 200,992	\$ 2,548
Lay staff Salary-Benefit	\$ 218,600	\$ 250,804	\$ (32,204)
Insurance	\$ 43,446	\$ 50,000	\$ (6,554)
Building and Grounds	\$ 69,509	\$ 67,000	\$ 2,509
Admin and Finance	\$ 35,098	\$ 46,100	\$ (11,002)
Spiritual Growth	\$ 26,188	\$ 22,300	\$ 3,888
Music	\$ 1,218	\$ 800	\$ 418
Diocesan Assesment	\$ 86,417	\$ 101,200	\$ (14,783)
Comunications	\$ 1,795	\$ 3,700	\$ (1,905)
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$ 685,811</b>	<b>\$ 742,896</b>	
<b>Net Position</b>	<b>\$ 32,327</b>	<b>Revenue over Expenses</b>	

<b>Balance Sheet Highlights</b>			
	<b>Dec 31, 2023</b>	<b>12/31/2022</b>	
Church Checking Account	\$ 42,323	\$219,053	
Church Savings Account	\$ 136,885	\$150,378	
Penny Wise Accounts	\$ 162,168	\$131,334	
ECW Bank Account	\$ 11,476	\$11,476	
Total Current Assets	\$ 352,852	\$512,242	
Total General Endowment	\$ 2,331,214	\$803,425	
NT Felsberg Endowment	\$ 326,400	\$286,391	
	<u>\$ 3,010,466</u>	\$1,089,816	
Less short term liabilities	\$ 21,312	\$66,466	
Less long term liabilities	\$ -	\$0	
<b>TOTAL FINANCIAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 2,989,154</b>	<b>\$1,023,350</b>	

<b>Restricted Accounts Highlights</b>				
	Beginning	Income	Expense	Ending Bal
Total Outreach Accounts	\$ 59,029	\$ 105,580	\$109,950	\$54,658
Total Church Activity Accounts	\$ 159,680	\$ 63,623	\$188,776	\$34,526
Facilities Resrve Account	\$ 61,189	\$ 61,199	\$ 77,945	\$44,443

The Endowment Commission is charged with two responsibilities. The first is to oversee the care and management of the Endowment Fund assets. The second is to educate our parishioners about the importance of their participation in growing the assets of the Fund through provision for St. Mary’s in their financial plans. This latter responsibility is critical to maintaining St. Mary’s role as a beacon in our community for both spreading the Word and ministering to its needs, even while economic circumstances fluctuate. The Fund’s current contribution to our operating budget is \$37,000 per year, up from \$20,000 in 2020, and, because of strains on our pledge income, is above where conservative stewardship would suggest. The Fund also has a separate trust that is confined to caring for a portion of the church’s landscaping expenses.

The Fund has greatly benefited in the last several months from the generosity of several current and former parishioners who have contributed a total of \$1,365,000. The Commission will be setting up two additional accounts within the Fund to provide for proper accounting of the restrictions attached to their use. Financial markets were also a favorable tail wind in 2023. The time-weighted rate of return on the Fund’s assets was 32.3%. As of yearend, the Fund’s investments were divided as follows: cash equivalents 16%, fixed income 5% and equities 79%. Growth in the Fund over time can be seen in the table below.

.....	.....
2015 .....	\$578,403
.....	.....
2016 .....	\$665,011
.....	.....
2017 .....	\$886,431
.....	.....
2018 .....	\$807,977
.....	.....
2019 .....	\$1,024,163
.....	.....
2020 .....	\$1,172,023
.....	.....
2021 .....	\$1,353,025
.....	.....
2022 .....	\$1,048,650
.....	.....
2023 .....	\$2,692,581

The Commission hopes many more of us will make the decision to join our Legacy Society, composed of those who have either given immediate gifts to the Fund or who have made provision in their financial affairs for a future donation. For any of our members who would like to join this kind of support, the steps needed to do so are relatively simple but should probably include legal advice.

The current members of the Commission include Joe Daniele, Bob Foltz and John Osborne as well as our Rector, Ryan Wright and our Treasurer, Kathleen Palaia, who are Ex officio members. Please thank them for their service.

Hilton Jervey, Chairman

**VESTRY/ANNUAL MEETING REPORT: STEWARDSHIP**

From Joanna Wragg, Stewardship Chair

The 2024 Stewardship campaign is scheduled to kick off on Sunday, Jan. 21. The pledge-card packet is in production and will be mailed either shortly before or shortly after that date.

Results will be reported as they become available.

As of this writing, Realm shows pledges for 2024 of \$59,000.

**Report of Assistant Priest****The Rev'd. Dr. D. William Faupel**

It has been a privilege and joy to be able to serve St. Mary's as an Assistant Priest under the leadership of Father Wright during the past year. My responsibilities include:

1. Oversight of and participation in Pastoral Care;
2. Participation in Christian Formation,
3. Assisting Fr. Wright in the liturgical services,
4. Involvement in planning through participation in:
  - a. Weekly
    - 1) Clergy Meetings and
    - 2) Staff Meetings
  - b. Semi-Monthly
    - 1) Pastoral Care Commission Meetings
  - c. Monthly
    - 1) Vestry Meetings,
    - 2) Worship Commission Meetings,
    - 3) Christian Formation Commission Meetings and
    - 4) Membership Commission Meetings.

During the course of the year, I taught:

1. A ten-week series on the Life of Paul,
2. A five-week series on the book of Jonah and
3. Participated in David Bergquist's five-week series on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.
4. In addition, I did the preparation work for my current series on Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

I celebrated 12 monthly Eucharist servers at Bentley in addition to 10 monthly Recovery Eucharists, in addition to my regular rotation of preaching, celebrating and assisting at St. Mary's principle Saturday/Sunday services. In addition, I made 22 hospital visits and 140 home visits. I conducted eight funerals, one baptism and no weddings this past year.

Respectfully submitted,

D. William Faupel+  
Priest Assistant

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your path.” Proverbs 3:5-6*

This scripture continues to help me remain focused as I minister where needed during a very full ‘Season’ at St. Mary’s, Bonita Springs.

First Wednesdays: **“Prayer and Share”** before **Healing Eucharist**

2022 began with a full agenda for Wednesdays. People were just emerging from Covid so we offered to all interested, “Prayer and Share,” one hour before Wednesday Healing Eucharist. Order of St. Luke also offered lunch on First Wednesdays to cement our sense of community.

**During Lent** we offered to all who were interested **Stations of the Cross** every Wednesday before Holy Eucharist.

**Order of St. Luke [OSL]** schedule was packed with teaching Jan. - Dec. via Zoom. Continuing education is a priority for all OSL members which means we meet twice monthly for spiritual growth and once monthly for a business meeting with Pastoral Ministries and Christian Formation all year. **OSL ‘Growing Deeper’** materials for the year were, “This is Where Your Healing Begins,” Nigel Mumford, “7 Ways to Pray,” Amy Boucher and currently, “Healing Miracles in Acts of the Apostles,” Paul Feider.

The **OSL Seekers** class resumed study that began June 2021 via Zoom. Scattered all over the U.S. we managed to remain a tight community as we studied “Healing Scriptures of Jesus” and joined the main group as we studied “This is Where Your Healing Begins” by Nigel Mumford. By April 2022, our “Seekers” became full members of the Order of St. Luke and became prayer partners during worship services.

As Chaplain of OSL, I was also the leader and mentor as I guided all OSL members through their studies of healing scriptures and prayer. Co-Chairs Cherrill Cregar and Joan Croteau continue to inform and encourage all participants.

OSL members attended a healing conference, January 22, 2022 at St. John’s Naples with speaker Craig Miller to fulfill the OSL annual retreat requirement.

The 2023 healing conference is February 11, at Faith Lutheran, Naples. All are invited.

**Wonderful Wednesdays** began in February and met on Zoom each week at 7pm.

Fr. Faupel and I shared the teaching as we reviewed “Celebration of Discipline” by Richard Foster. We also led various groups through a list of **Spiritual Gifts** and then shared results of the the Spiritual Gifts questionnaire that would affirm their own Spiritual Gifts. We began with all Vestry members and then offered these sessions to all who were interested. Over 40 people participated. Most were already deeply involved in ministry. This exercise affirmed that each was ministering as they were ‘called.’

**Safeguarding God’s Church** became a priority at St. Mary’s. The **Vestry members** were the first group to complete the required **5 “Safe Church” modules on-line**. They are “Safe Church” certified for 5 years. All active **OSL members** were also required to complete the “Safe Church” modules. **Clergy and staff** fulfilled this requirement as did **Altar Servers**. St. Mary’s members who work with **New Horizons** were invited to complete these modules even though they completed the required state background check. PennyWise leaders and managers were invited to complete this course, but none have done so. **Over 50 people** at St. Mary’s church are “Safe Church” certified for the next five years.

**Preaching schedule:** Celebration of Holy Eucharist and preaching each Wednesday was offered for all at St. Mary’s. Preaching one full weekend each month was all that was needed to be of service to the other clergy from mid- November through mid-May.



**Meetings** attended: Christian Formation, OSL/Pastoral Ministries, Worship Commission, Vestry meetings, weekly staff and clergy meetings. During the summer months when I am not physically at St. Mary's Church, I attended these meetings on Zoom. I also led weekly OSL classes via Zoom, June - Oct. I remain actively involved in clergy decisions via zoom or telephone as we meet throughout the summer.

**Pastoral/Hospital visits** as needed. I live near NCH Baker so am 'on call' for visits seven days a week. I am rarely called to visit in person but make pastoral telephone calls to parishioners as needed.

**CHRISTIAN FORMATION Annual Report for year 2023.** Submitted January 2024  
The Rev'd Gail Tomei      gailtomei@stmarysbonita.org

*"I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope . . . " Jer. 29:11*

God's plan is for St. Mary's Church to explode with the Love of the Lord through continuous Christian formation. I remain the 'temporary' director of Christian Formation for another year.

**ALPHA+** was a great success with 65 people joining the 10-week course. Thursday evening was not the best time to offer this course but, with faithful table leaders and much help, we managed to set up each week promptly at 5:00 when we were allowed to enter the parish hall after New Horizons completed their day. Each table packed and stored their ALPHA supply bins, including table settings, when AA promptly appeared at 7:00 each week. We compressed dinner and discussion but enjoyed the weekly Nikki Gumble videos. Most weeks Fr. Ryan added a short talk on our sacramental roots to round out our Christian Formation.

Many could not attend ALPHA at night so we will offer "**Afternoon ALPHA**" on Thursday afternoons, 1-2:30pm, January 18 to March 21, 2024. All are welcome!

**Bible Study**, led by Fr. Bill Faupel, Wednesdays at 10:30 am on Zoom, met throughout the summer and finished a study on the Apostle Paul. David Bergquist led a 5-week study on Ephesians which ended in December. "Reading Romans Backwards" will be offered by Fr. Faupel in 2024 at a **new time, 10:00 am Wednesdays**.

**Book Study Group**, on Zoom, continues to meet Mondays at 12:00.

**Children and Youth Ministry:** Nancy Vaughn director. Sunday school is always a full slate, prepared each week, following the weekly liturgical readings, for any children who attend. Nancy created packets or baskets filled with colorful scripture quotes, pads and pencils, and other delights for each season, even summer. Saying prayers, lighting the Advent wreath and participation in the Christmas service are just a few of the opportunities she creates for the children.

**Cursillo:** We hoped that several church members would be at the **Cursillo** retreat at the Dayspring conference center in February and October but none chose to attend. We found that 30+ members who attended ALPHA have already 'made' their Cursillo. We need someone who can recruit new 'babe chicks' as well as help re-organize weekly '**Grouping**' groups and begin monthly **Ultreyas**. All who have attended Cursillo are encouraged to join a "4th day Grouping" group. Only two St. Mary's members attend weekly 'Grouping' at this time. Email me if interested in facilitating this ministry.

**Daughters of the King [DOK]**, President, Joanna Wragg organized our new chapter. **DOK** membership was offered to all women at St. Mary's Church. This year our rector offered this opportunity to all St. Mary's women. The Diocesan DOK President and V.P., Janet Smith and Wendy Martucci, spoke to St. Mary's Church at the April worship services and shared the focus of DOK: Prayer, Service, Evangelism. During the summer sixteen women met for 12 weeks of discernment classes on Zoom. We learned how to create a personal 'Rule of Life', ways to serve the clergy within the St. Mary's community and how to Know Christ and make Christ known to others. A few in discernment attended Diocesan and Deanery DOK retreats and gatherings on zoom and at other churches. Fourteen (14) women were inducted into the **BETHANY Chapter** of DOK at St. Mary's Church at the worship service on November, 19. At that time the Rev'd Gail Tomei was instituted as DOK Bethany Chapter Chaplain. Our first meeting was in December. We will continue to meet at the church the third Wednesday of each month, 1:00 pm, after Noon Holy Eucharist.

**Education For Ministry [EFM]**, led by Fr. Bill Faupel. The six students in this 4-yr seminary quality course of Christian study with dynamic discussion met Tuesdays, 9:00 AM but was unable to continue during the summer. The course will begin again in 2024 and will meet on Wednesdays, 4:00 - 6:00pm, in the parish hall.

**Holy Eucharist** offered Wednesdays of each week during 'season', led by Mother Gail Tomei, continues to be a great way to feed and nurture the soul. **Healing Eucharist** is offered each 'First Wednesday'. **During Lent** we offered **Stations of the Cross** at 11:00 each Wednesday before Holy Eucharist. We will do the same in 2024.

**Library** is administered by Diana Dearth administrator. Monthly book selection, easy database to retrieve books, and a large children's book selection. Book displays are offered each liturgical season. "FREE books" basket remains in the Narthex. The library is open week days during office hours and Sundays. Donations of extraordinary editions are worth browsing. Diana plans to devote more time to the Library in 2024.

**Order of St. Luke [OSL]** facilitated by co-leaders, Cherrill Cregar and Joan Croteau. Growing Deeper, consisting of various studies for all OSL members, meets on Zoom twice monthly all year for spiritual growth and once monthly for a business meeting. **OSL 'Growing Deeper'** materials for the year were, Healing Miracles in Acts of the Apostles by Paul Feider and The Wonderful Spirit Filled Life by Charles Stanley, which we will continue to use in 2024. Most OSL members attended a healing conference in February at Faith Lutheran Church, Naples. February 3, 2024, St. John's, Naples will hold the next annual OSL healing conference for this deanery. All interested are invited.

The **OSL Seekers** class, facilitated by Cathi Ratay, is for those seeking OSL membership. They began a five-week scripture study in September on Zoom. They began the study of a revised series of 26 lessons in "Healing Scriptures of Jesus." Due to new OSL regulations, the teacher, Cathi, spent her summer months, on Zoom, being certified to teach these classes. Cathi will continue to lead the 26 lessons each Tuesday, 2-3:30, in person in the parish hall through March 2024. **April 7, 2024, our "Seekers"** will be inducted into full membership in the Order of St. Luke the Physician and became OSL prayer partners. If interested please contact Cathi Ratay or Mother Gail.

**Safeguarding God's People**, required by our diocese, has been a priority at St. Mary's Church. All new Vestry members complete the required 5 "Safe Church" modules on-line and are "Safe Church" certified for 5 years. All active OSL and DOK members, Altar servers, Clergy and Staff are required to complete the new series of "Safe Church" modules when they re-certify. **Over 50 people** are "Safe Church" certified.

**Seder meal**, organized by Wendy Scheible and myself, offered at 5:00 pm on **Maundy Thursday**, was a great success with 42 in attendance. Jewish friends shared the opening prayer in Hebrew and sang ‘Di-a-nu ’{as if that were not enough}. Sharing parts of the Haggada with Jesus in our hearts was a learning experience for many. At the end of the meal all are invited to attend the Maundy Thursday service at 7:00pm.

**Ministry Fair** highlights all active church ministries. Offered November 2023, it will also be the focal point for the Stewardship campaign January 2024. For the first time since the churches were quarantined with COVID, Vestry members and ministry leaders were asked to ‘show and tell’ with a large “tri-fold” displays filled with information regarding each ministry. Leaders ‘process’ with banners during the worship service the day of each Ministry Fair. All banners currently decorate the walls of or parish hall.

“Season” is very short in 2024. Lent begins February 14 and Holy Week begins Palm Sunday, March 24. Easter is March 31. Christian Formation is packed into a very tight schedule.

The words, “**I will get involved next year,**” may not be the best idea as many current offerings may not be offered again. God has plans for each of us . . . to know his love and grace, to connect in community and grow spiritually throughout each year.

## **Report from the Communications Commission**

### **Chair & Vestry Liaison, Joanna Wragg**

#### **Looking Back at 2023:**

##### ***Fountain***

The lighted fountain next to Bonita Beach Road came on line in September, resulting in long-needed increased visibility for the church. The old sea grape hedge was removed and new, lower landscaping installed. The fountain displays the church’s name and logo and the Episcopal shield; at night those elements are back-lit and the “living waters” of the fountain display varied colors that the church office can adjust according to the season,

##### ***Videos***

Viewership via Facebook of our live-streamed church service held steady throughout the year at an average of 105 per week. We do not have access to detailed information on this population but we know that it is 2/3 female and majority older than 45.

Live-streaming of funerals continues to be the most-viewed feature, posting higher numbers than the Sunday masses. Families of the deceased willingly pay the cost of the videographer.

##### ***Ministry Fair***

The return of the Ministry Fair was well received, with parishioners lingering after the 10 a.m. to chat. Attendance at the January fair was higher than in November. We recommend focusing in the future on a single Fair, during the Season, dropping the one in the fall.

#### **Going forward in 2024:**

##### ***Advertising***

Given that some 30,000 cars per day pass our site during “season,” according to Lee County transportation reports, it makes sense now to leverage the enhanced visibility of our church with some additional advertising. We begin with an ad in the golf-course guide for Bonita Fairways off Terry Street. This is a public course, moderately priced, that is frequented by locals and visitors alike. The printed course guide is distributed to thousands of players, year-round. Our business-card-sized ad features a photo of the fountain, and the address. At \$395 for the year, this ad was a bargain and is our first print-media ad in at least five years. We will continue to be alert to similar low-cost, high-value opportunities.

### *Video streaming*

We are experimenting with the Vimeo video platform with the goal of embedding our videos in the [stmarysbonita.org](http://stmarysbonita.org) web site, where it is accessible to all whether or not they have a Facebook account. Any passerby who googles “St.Mary’s” while in this area is taken to our church, with a link to our web site; The web site therefore is the more effective access point for seekers to see videos of our services and other activities.

Free Facebook streaming has served us well but has limits on flexibility, reach and control. The diocese and many sister churches use Vimeo technology.

One goal for the video program is to formalize the virtual congregation as much as possible, culling out the ever-present ‘bots that roam the virtual world and make actual contact with real human beings: shut-ins, night workers, traveling members and others who depend on a virtual worship experience.

Annual cost for Vimeo is \$780; we hope to recover at least some of that cost through on-line donations from the virtual congregation.

Submitted by Joanna Wragg, Communications Chair

### **Report of the Worship Commission    Ian Mitchell**

The Worship Commission is a committee of clergy, staff, and lay people of St. Mary’s Episcopal Church who serve the parish by supporting and promoting the use of established liturgical principles and practices. The Commission ensures that these principles are consistent with the Canons, By-Laws and Regulations of the Episcopal Church of the United States.

As required by the Canons, the chair of the Worship Commission is the Rector; indeed the Commission actually functions in an advisory capacity to the Rector, who is the final determiner of the worship practices of the parish. All other commissions and committees may be chaired by laypersons. Membership on the Commission comprises representation by the Clergy, Music Ministry, Altar Guild, Pastoral Care, and scheduling coordinators for the regular worship services, the weekday services, and special services.

The Commission plans and discusses all the special services for the liturgical seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, etc. In addition, the Commission reviews and discusses changes and protocols for all worship services and special services at St. Mary’s throughout the year. This past year has been particularly challenging because of the retirement of David Bergquist who worked on behalf of the Rector as secretary. This is now covered by the Parish Administrator, Ian Mitchell. The live-streaming of various services is under the prevue of Junior Warden and Communications, it is intended to make this element a more robust team in this coming year.

One key committee within the Worship Commission, the Altar Guild (Sandie Beihl). The Altar Guild provides the support and services needed for meaningful and appropriate worship throughout the year, including all special services.

The Music Ministry, also filing a separate report, provides an expressive articulation of the parts of the worship services provided by our organist, cantors, and choir.

The organization of volunteers for ushers at each service and the acolytes, lectors has been accomplished by a team of volunteers who have given great service to the worship at St. Mary’s. The bulletins are produced in the church office by Sandra Cecchini and the gathering of information for each week is a detailed and important factor in how successful this element is.

It is the intention moving forward this year to have regular meetings to assist with the worship organization in support of the Rector and clergy plans.

## **Annual Report for 2023 from the Organist and Music Director, Bill Elliott**

St Augustine (354-430) said “Those who sing pay twice”, and I want to thank the many of you who contributed to the “Choir Angels” fund last year and especially to Sandy Renner who worked so hard on conceiving and “spear heading” this. The “choir Angels” fund allows us to engage FGCU students to be section leaders in our choir. These young people have added not only to more excellence and participation to our music but also to the life of our parish. This is an ongoing fund and not a one time donation. It is also a form of outreach and impacts their lives in ways we cannot imagine. I also want to thank our rector and the clergy who were so very supportive of good music here at St. Mary’s church. I really must say a hearty **THANK YOU** to those choir members who come to rehearsals each Wednesday night and early Sunday mornings week after week to prepare. I appreciate your dedication more than I have words to express.

Our hymns were chosen with the aid of “The Episcopal Musician’s Handbook” which gives a synopsis of the readings and music appropriate to those readings. Also, the service music reflected the season with more joyous music at Easter, Pentecost and Christmas and more somber music during lent and advent. I am always “open” to hearing any requests for music by our parishioners.

We were fortunate to have a fine trumpet player to add that special “spark” to the Easter and Christmas liturgies. And any contributions to the music fund to help pay for this is appreciated.

When I came to St. Mary’s church as the organist and director of music we had an aging electronic instrument that was failing. In my first week every other note on the bottom keyboard did not play, and the whole instrument was out of adjustment and unreliable. We had the company representative here five times to work on it, and finally he said he had done all he could but we would never be satisfied with the results. So, we bought a small but fine pipe organ conceived for practice from the cathedral in Louisville, Kentucky who had “been in the same boat” and replaced it with a larger and more appropriate organ for leading the music. We here at St. Mary’s need to be aware of the **NEED** for a larger **CHURCH** organ to help lead the singing not only of the congregation, but especially the choir. We are forced at the present time to use the piano for the choir. It is important to note that an organ has an appropriate action, pipes and wind to make the pipes speak properly in a case just as a piano has an action, strings and case. Trained organists do not want to take music positions in church with electronic instruments that really are not organs just as it is unthinkable to ask a serious pianist to play on an electronic piano.

I heard fairly often people say they started attending St. Mary’s because of the music. May God be praised and our congregation be edified by our music. The choir begins every rehearsal by praying “Bless, O Lord, us thy servants who minister in your temple. Grant that what we sing with our lips we may show in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. May that be true of us all.

Blessings and Peace,

Bill Elliott, organist and music director

## Report of the Outreach Commission

Paul Scheible

At the outset of 2023, the commission reorganized itself to name chairs for different functional areas and to rewrite our mission statement and methods. Both efforts were to sharpen our focus and activities throughout the year.

Food security is one of the functional areas. Within it, activities included seasonal volunteering with Harvest Time Ministry and food drives in support of Harvest Time Ministry and the Café of Life. Additionally, the commission distributed food gift cards in the summer to the Baso community families which are part of Harvest Time Ministry outreach.

Another major functional area comprises the annual grants awarded to nonprofit organizations (most of which are local). These organizations provide a diverse array of services to people in need. These grants total \$50,500 for 2024. A list of the 2024 grantees appears at the end of this report. We have also prepared a description of each organization, their contact information and history with our outreach efforts. This document is available on request. Finally, supplemental grants were awarded to Love Inc. and the Café of Life to meet extraordinary funding requirements.

Support for literacy is an area of interest that underwent change this year. In the past, this interest included hosting the New Horizons Super Kids Club on campus and annual grants to them and the Literacy Council of the Gulf Coast. Although the Super Kids Club moved off campus at the conclusion of the 2022-23 academic year, we still fund a grant for New Horizons. As well, the books that were purchased for the Super Kids Club library and which they could not use in their new location were donated to the Ft. Myers Beach Elementary school for their library. The grant for seminary education was continued, but the grant for the Literacy Council was suspended this year in order use funds for other areas with greater needs.

Other activities of the commission included the annual Christmas toy gift giving, hosting coffee hours following the 10 am services, hosting a booth in the autumn Ministry Fair and funding a \$5,000 match grant in support of the collection of funds for mid-east relief.

### Outreach Commission Grantees for 2024

After the rain of SWFL	\$4,000	New Beginnings.....	\$5,000
Café of Life	4,000	New Horizons .....	2,000
Harvest Time Ministries	5,000	Our Mothers' Home.....	5,000
Life Giving Waters International	4,000	All Souls Episcopal Church .....	1,000
Love Inc. (administrative)	10,000	Seminary education.....	1,000
Love Inc. (neighbors helping neighbors)	2,500	<u>Dearborn County Clearing House.</u>	<u>2,000</u>
Meals of Hope	5,000	Total .....	\$50,500

**Pastoral Ministries** involve outreach to others through a variety of ministries.

Trained leaders provide care for one another, care for self and care for those in need of a pastoral visit. Qualifications for each are varied. All have completed seventeen weeks of *Healing Scriptures of Jesus* and maintain an annual membership in the International Order of St. Luke [OSL]. Each OSL member has made a commitment to continue their spiritual growth through “Growing Deeper” classes offered two Thursdays each month. OSL members are also invited to the Healing Eucharist the first Wednesday of each month. The current OSL team consists of 26 members.

**Power of Prayer [PoP] team:** Prayer requests are sent to: [powerofprayer@stmarysbonita.org](mailto:powerofprayer@stmarysbonita.org) throughout the year. The Pastoral Ministries Chair, Yolanda Naimoli, receives these prayers and sends the request to one of two pastoral ministries. Prayer requests for St. Mary’s parishioners are sent to the Pastoral Care team. Prayer requests, for friends and loved ones, are sent to the Power of Prayer [PoP] team members for 30 days of prayer. If a request needs further prayer, another prayer request may be submitted. The PoP team is OSL certified.

**Prayers are kept confidential.**

**Pastoral Care:** For parishioners who are unable to attend weekly church services due to illness or physical challenge. The Pastoral Caregiver contacts their assigned person for prayer, encouragement and Holy Communion. Each Caregiver is vetted by Clergy before being placed on the Pastoral Care [PC] team. Communication skills, sensitivity, deep spirituality and confidentiality are primary. Pastoral Caregivers must be OSL Certified, licensed by the diocese as Lay Eucharistic Visitors and trained for home/hospital visits. They must also maintain the Diocesan requirement of completing five [5] units of “*Safeguarding*” classes every three years.

**Prayer at Worship Services:** Prayer teams pray with people at the close of each worship service. At least two OSL trained prayer partners are present for those attending each worship service who desire prayer. **All prayers are kept confidential.**

**Healing Eucharist:** First Wednesday of each month. Healing litany, the sermon and anointing with prayer are offered as we focus on healing both body and soul. Holy Eucharist is also offered every Wednesday at Noon, January to May.

**Prayer Request Cards** are **no longer** needed. Personal prayer is offered at all services and the Power of Prayer email continues to be offered at any time of day or night all year. Prayer offered 24/7/365 at the following email address: [powerofprayer@stmarysbonita.org](mailto:powerofprayer@stmarysbonita.org)

**Prayers of Hope:** Offered 3rd Monday of each month. Prayers offered to all who pick up food through “Meals of Hope” in St. Mary’s parking lot. We receive about 50-60 prayer requests each time and many are in Spanish. Some on the OSL certified prayer team can translate requests as they pray. Prayer cards are destroyed after prayer. All prayer is kept confidential.

**Prayer Shawl Ministry:** Meets every Tuesday at 10:00 am in the Parish Hall and is led by Barbara Williams. Volunteers may create specific shawl patterns at home and join the group at St. Mary’s to stitch, share and pray at various times throughout the year. For those knitting or crocheting shawls, each stitch is a prayer for the person who will soon receive it. The shawls provide warmth and comfort for body and soul to those in need, sickness or adversity. Each prayer shawl is packaged with care in a labeled drawer in the storage room according to

size. Anyone can take a shawl if they sign the sheet with their name, shawl size and shawl receiver. All shawls are blessed by clergy at a worship service as needed. Prayer shawls are also placed in a basket in the church narthex for those who need a ‘warm hug’ while worshipping in the cooler air.

### **Future Ministry Opportunities**

**Walking the Mourner’s Path:** An eight-week, small group workshop that is grounded in prayer and led by trained facilitators. This Christ-centered program is a great source to help in the management of the grieving process. The facilitators are well trained parishioners who have a heart for those dealing with grief. An OSL trained prayer team prays off-site for each individual throughout the course. This course will be offered when a new team of volunteers is found and trained.

### **Daughters of the King**

**Joanna Wragg**

Thirteen parishioners completed the 13-week Discernment Process and were duly admitted to The Order of the Daughters of the King in November. Mtr. Gail Tomei was installed as the chapter’s chaplain.

The new chapter, named “Bethany Chapter,” meets monthly at 1 p.m. on the third Wednesday. Five members already have attended diocesan assemblies or other similar events, and four are planning to attend the Triennial National Convention in Louisville, Ky in June.

First priority in this inaugural year is for the group of 14 to coalesce into a solid, Spirit-based religious community supporting its members in their many and varied ministries within the parish and larger church and community. The chapter plans to explore available opportunities for spiritual growth and cohesion, including use of St. Mary’s labyrinth,

Launching a Junior Daughters (ages 7-21) is a near-term goal. Two girls have been identified as possible members; if a third is identified, a Juniors chapter can be founded under the mentorship of Denise Wallace.

Officers:

Co-presidents: Joanna Wragg, Yolanda Naimoli

Co-VPs: Deb Haslouer, Ruth Davies

Co-Secretaries: Denise Wallace, Ellen Hicks

Co-Treasurers: Andrea Foisy, Holley Bond Pittman

### **Annual Report St. Mary’s Episcopal Church Women (ECW)**

Betty Folkerth and Judy Phillips

Every woman at St. Mary’s Church, whether she attends year-‘round or seasonally, is automatically a member of Episcopal Church Women (ECW) and is warmly included in its activities.

In the spring, the existing leader resigned, and the board was not successful in identifying a new chairperson. It wasn’t clear if ECW would have a future at St. Mary’s. And so, 2023 became a transitional year for the group.

In June, Betty Folkerth and Judy Phillips assumed co-leadership of the organization. Cherrill Cregar signed on as Program Chair. Diane Daniele continued as treasurer until October 6, when Annette Leahy-Judkins assumed the role. The new board includes Cheryle Schlee, secretary; Lana Martindale, Foyer Groups; Deb Haslouer, UTO; Candy Bergquist, advisor.



Twinky Otis, Because We Care (renewed position.) In December, Doris Bialowas announced her retirement from chairing Lunch Bunch and there was not enough evidence of interest in the congregation to continue the group.

The annual Stay-at-Home Tea (SAHT) is the major fundraising event for ECW, and it is traditionally organized in the spring with letters mailed to the women of the parish in the early summer. Because new leadership hadn't surfaced in early spring, the former ECW board did not solicit funds through the annual Stay-at-Home Tea (SAHT) and ECW's coffers were depleted. It was imperative that the new board move quickly to raise operating funds and plan programs for the 2023-24 season.

In early October, a core group mailed letters for a fall SAHT ingathering that proved to be extremely successful. Women of St. Mary's generously responded with donations. This was the second largest amount ever raised. The new board carefully planned six major programs and advertised them in a trifold brochure, produced and printed in-house, that is distributed to every woman in the parish. The brochure is available at the Welcome Wagon on Sundays and in the narthex and parish hall.

Historically, contributions to ECW, including for the SAHT, were not entered into the church Realm accounting system, and were not noted on annual giving statements issued by the church office. This was a source of concern for our ECW donors. In a major shift this year, all transactions are being processed through the church's Operating Account. This now allows us to record ECW donations and other charitable giving to individual accounts using the church's Realm system. Since that change, we have been grateful recipients of two substantial cash donations from members. The Regions Bank account will be discontinued in 2024 in favor of an ECW account at First Horizon Bank so that all the church accounts will be located at one institution.

Monthly meetings are on the second Tuesday of each month with exceptions in December and February. Each meeting begins with a celebrated Eucharist at 11 a.m. Lunch (privately underwritten this year) and a meeting with a program complete the afternoon activity. Our programs are intended to encourage the women of St Mary's to participate in spiritual growth through sharing Christian fellowship with each other. Every woman in the parish has special gifts to offer and an opportunity to grow and learn from others.

In early November, the Outreach Commission approached ECW to ask for assistance in organizing the annual Kindness for Kids Christmas giving program, a favorite parish undertaking. ECW volunteers responded with organizational planning, decorating the narthex Giving Tree with ornaments and personal tags for nearly 80 children, as well as shopping, packaging and delivering gifts.

Thirty-five women attended the November general meeting and luncheon, "A Gem of a Tree." The tree, decorated with vintage jewelry donated by ECW members, was repurposed as a raffle item at the Christmas tea.

After several years of celebrating the Christmas Tea in private clubs, this year's tea returned to the decorated parish hall and 111 women came to the party on December 9<sup>th</sup> from 2-4 p.m. The theme was "The Gifts of the Spirit" in keeping with Advent. Our clergy poured tea for the guests. Bill Elliott (dressed as Santa) accompanied carol singing on the piano, and two men helped to manage cash sales. Two additional men volunteered to serve and clean-up; and two daughters of the congregation, Lee Fox, and Natalie Fox (also dressed as an elf) served food. All the food, silent auction (including jewelry and gift baskets), raffle, sale items (hand-embroidered ornaments by Nancy Reidel, home-made jams from David Smith), and work were donated by volunteers so that ECW's treasury has grown exponentially.

Interest in Foyer Groups has waned over the past few seasons, and we are considering how to revive active participation in these fellowship building experiences. Look for a renewed and refreshed model of “mixers” in the 2024-25 season.

This spring, ECW will prepare another Stay-at-Home Tea fund drive in keeping with its traditional season-ending activity. The vision of the ECW board is to use the funds generated for refurbishing and adding to the facilities inside the church and parish hall.

ST. MARY’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN (ECW) FINANCIAL SUMMARY (Year End)  
12/31/23 (highlights from 7/1/2023 – 12/31/23)

ECW Regions Bank (operating acct) June 30, 2023 \$4,486.29

ECW Regions Bank                      December 31, 2023 \$4,186.29

Revenues deposited in Regions Bank Acct were \$160 for 2023

This year-end balance reflects 3 disbursements totaling \$300 for a program expense and gifts for staff (unaudited).

ECW held 2 major events in the last quarter of 2023: The Stay at Home Tea (SAHT) and the traditional Christmas Tea Party.

Total event revenues \$ 9,365

Stay At Home Tea \$ 5,590

Christmas Tea Party \$ 3,775

Special purpose donations \$ 3,510

Total ECW income (6 months) \$12,875

All transactions for the last half of 2023 flowed through the church’s ECW Restricted Account and the First Horizon Bank in anticipation of a banking change in early 2024.

The 50 plus volunteers that run Pennywise produced another successful year. We give thanks for their efforts that provided a contribution to St. Mary's Episcopal Church of \$120,000 on sales of almost \$150,000 and after expenses and a small contribution to reserves.

In addition, 63 cases of winter clothing were collected, packed and shipped to the Dearborn County (Indiana) Clearing House for distribution to the poor.

The volunteers hosted coffee hours following the 10 am services as well as a booth in the autumn Ministry Fair.

Operation accomplishments included:

- New pricing methods for clothing
- New \$3 clothing displays to offer items rotating out of regular stock before they are donated to charities
- A Cashiers' Manual of Procedures
- New security measures to guard against shoplifting clothes
- Acquisition of new display furniture for goods to be sold in what was part of the furniture section

In 2024, staff plan on exterior painting, new signage at the entrance to the store and repairs to some rotted molding.

The store is open 10 am to 3 pm Tuesdays through Saturdays during season and Wednesdays through Saturday off season. New volunteers are always needed and welcomed. If you would like to volunteer for all or part of a day please contact Pam Stamper at 239-284-6341.

### **Membership Commission Annual Report 2023**

Nelson Burr

The current members of the Commission are Nelson Burr, Chairperson and Vestry Representative, Father Faupel, Clergy Representative, Joanne Bursack, 10 am Representative, Pam Stamper 5 pm Representative.

Currently the Commission is seeking a Representative from the 8 am service.

#### **Welcome Center**

This past year, the Welcome Center was gifted a new rolling table to use in the porte cochere to welcome visitors to the church. A large "Welcome" sign was also purchased to identify the Welcome Center.

Several new volunteers were added to the Greeters. New procedures were put into place to identify first time visitors and issue name badges to those who request one.

The Membership Commission also participated in the Ministry Fair.

#### **Coffee Hour**

The Coffee Hour has been an instrumental part of welcoming new visitors as well as creating an atmosphere of fellowship for regular attenders.

Currently we have seen an increase in attendance along with an increase in giving to the Coffee Fund.

## Goals for 2024

- Revive the Membership Commission by adding new Representatives from the 8 am Worship Service.
- Create a Welcome Packet to give to Visitors describing St. Mary's and our various Commissions and Ministries.
- Increase participation in Coffee Hour
- Develop job descriptions for Coffee Hour Hosts and Greeters.
- Create several Visitors Parking Spots
- Revive the "Green Dot" program

### Listing of Staff & Vestry

SAINT MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF BONITA SPRINGS  
*Where Word and Sacrament come together  
in celebration and service*

#### STAFF

The Rev'd Ryan A. Wright, Rector	rector@stmarysbonita.org
The Rev'd. Dr. D. William Faupel, Assistant Priest	bfaupel@stmarysbonita.org
The Rev'd. Gail Tomei, Assistant Priest	gtomei@stmarysbonita.org
William Elliott, Organist and Choir Master	WElliott@stmarysbonita.org
Nancy Vaughn, Director Youth & Families Ministries	youthminister@stmarysbonita.org
Ian Mitchell, Parish Administrator	churchoffice@stmarysbonita.org
Sandra Cecchini, Office Assistant	officeassistant@stmarysbonita.org

#### SAINT MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Church Office: (239) 992-4343

9803 Bonita Beach Road

P.O. Box 1923

Bonita Springs, FL 34133

churchoffice@stmarysbonita.org

www.stmarysbonita.org

www.facebook.com/stmarysbonita

Penny Wise Thrift Shop (239) 947-3363

The outgoing Vestry member as of January 28, 2024: Diane Dearth,

If the vote of the Parish is in concurrence, the new membership of the Vestry will be:  
Chester Phillips, Robert Foltz, Joanna Wragg, Kathleen Palaia, Gail Goggin, Sandra Renner,  
Chris Davies, Joan Croteau, Nelson Burr, Ron Westrom, Jack Sites and Paul Greene.

# NOTES



# CALENDAR OF DATES

<b>January 7</b>	<b>Epiphany</b>	
<b>February 14:</b>	<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	<b>The start of Lent</b>
<b>March 24</b>	<b>Palm Sunday</b>	<b>Holy Week</b>
<b>March 28</b>	<b>Maundy Thursday</b>	
<b>March 29</b>	<b>Good Friday</b>	
<b>March 30</b>	<b>Holy Saturday</b>	
<b>March 31</b>	<b>Easter Day</b>	
<b>May 19</b>	<b>The Day of Pentecost</b>	<b>The start of Pentecost</b>
<b>May 26</b>	<b>Trinity Sunday</b>	
<b>August 18</b>	<b>St. Mary's Day</b>	
<b>September 29</b>	<b>St Michael and All Angels</b>	
<b>November 3</b>	<b>All Saint's Day</b>	
<b>November 24</b>	<b>Christ the King</b>	<b>The last Sunday after Pentecost</b>
<b>December 1</b>	<b>First Sunday in Advent</b>	
<b>December 15</b>	<b>Gaudete Sunday</b>	
<b>December 24</b>	<b>Christmas Eve</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>
<b>December 25</b>	<b>The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>