

*St. Mary's Episcopal Church*

*1910 - 2024*

*Stone Harbor, New Jersey*



*2023 Annual Report to the Congregation*

*January 28, 2024*

**St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
Stone Harbor, NJ**

**Annual Meeting of the Parish  
January 28, 2024**

**Agenda**

- I. Call to Order and Opening Prayer
  - a. Appointment of Clerk
- II. Nominations and Elections
  - a. Nominations from the floor
  - b. 2024 Vestry
  - c. Delegates to Convention and Convocation
  - d. Nominations from the floor
- III. Minutes of 2023 Annual Meeting
- IV. Annual Parish Reports received
- V. Rector's Address
- VI. Senior Warden's Report
- VII. Treasurer's Report
  - a. 2024 Budget
  - b. Net Worth Over Time
  - c. 2024 Pledge Report
- VIII. Closing of the polls (if needed)
- IX. Comments, questions or concerns
- X. Necrology
- XI. Closing Prayer and Benediction
- XII. Adjournment

## **Opening Prayer for Annual Meeting**

God of the seasons turning, another summer has come and gone, and we gather for an Annual Meeting of this Parish. To this place we bring all the celebrations and hardships, the joys and the sorrows. To this place we bring all our hopes and dreams for our ministry in your church.

Here also we gather to look forward to what the coming years have in store. We know that they will not always be easy, that life will always have a mixture of easy and difficult.

As we meet and discuss the life and work of this part of your family, we pray that you would be a part of our discussion. May your Spirit move in our hearts, opening them to hear what each of us has to offer, bringing light to both possibilities and realities, drawing us always to consider what you would have us be and do in this time and place. Remind us that we are called to be bearers of Christ's life, light, and love to all we meet. Help us to live in such a way that we draw closer to your vision for us and journey faithfully in your Way.

In this time together we celebrate the many gifts we all have to offer. Help us offer what we can to your service and your glory, mindful of our great giftedness in so many ways throughout our lives. These things we pray in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the one we call Christ, in whose name and hope we gather together as a community.

**Amen**

## QUALIFICATIONS OF VOTERS ACCORDING TO CANON FIFTY

SECTION 2. The persons entitled to vote at such meetings must be:

- (a) baptized,
- (b) at least sixteen years of age,
- (c) of good moral character,
- (d) adhering to The Episcopal Church and to no other religious body,
- (e) regular attendants at the services of the Church in said Parish or Mission, and
- (f) regular contributors to the current expenses of the Parish or Mission for six months next before the said annual meeting.

A record of the regular contributors for the support of the Parish or Mission shall be maintained by the Treasurer, with the dates of their contributions. Such records shall be sufficient evidence as to the qualification of a voter with respect to the last preceding requirement. Any voters not baptized in the Parish must have been enrolled as members in accordance with the provisions of the Canons of The Episcopal Church. Rectors, Vicars, or Wardens shall keep a list of all members of the Congregation who have been received as voters, which list shall be open to inspection by the members of the Congregation. No one shall be permitted to vote or be eligible to office in more than one Parish or Mission in this Diocese, although members of a Parish or Mission may be eligible also to vote or hold office in a Chapel.

# Nominating Report

Annual Meeting January 28, 2024

## Vestry of 2023

Warden: Lillian Armstrong, Class 2025

Junior Warden: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Vestry Class 2024**

Bill Handley

Dina Ziembra

### **Vestry Class 2025**

Marion Myers

Lawrence Schmidt

### **Vestry Class 2026**

Dr. Sandra Harmon-Weiss

Cheryl Lukens Oleferuk

**The following candidates are placed in consideration for election offices of this church.**

### **Junior Warden (1 person – 2 year term)**

1. Cheryl Lukens Oleferuk

### **Vestry Person (2 person – 3 year term)**

1. Cathy Johnson
2. Allyn Penkethman

### **Vestry Person (1 person, unexpired term Class of 2026)**

1. Dina Ziembra

### **Delegates to Diocesan Convention (3 persons – 1 year term)**

- (1) Jack Olthuis
- (2) Lawrence Schmidt
- (3) Lillian Armstrong

### **Alternate Delegate to Diocesan Convention (3 persons – 1 year term)**

- (1) Lisa LaGreca
- (2)
- (3)

### **Delegate to Atlantic Convocation (3 persons – 1 year term)**

- (1) Lisa LaGreca
- (2) Yvonne Olthuis
- (3)

### **Alternate Delegate to Atlantic Convocation (3 persons – 1 year term)**

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)

**ST. MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
STONE HARBOR, NEW JERSEY**

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**JANUARY 29, 2023**

**MINUTES**

The Rector, the Rev. Mo. Allison Burns-LaGreca, called the meeting to order at 10:37 a.m., having declared a quorum.

The Rector offered an opening prayer.

Copies of the assembled and published reports of the Parish were distributed.

The Rector appointed Lawrence Schmidt to serve as clerk pro tem in the absence of Dina Ziembra, who was traveling out of state and could not be present.

The next item of business was the Nominations and Elections for Vestry, and Delegates to Diocesan Convention and the Atlantic Convocation. The following slate of candidates was advanced:

- Senior Warden (2-year term, ending 2025): Lillian Armstrong
- Jr. Warden (1-year, unexpired term ending 2024): [No nomination]
- Vestry (1-year unexpired term ending 2024): Bill Handley
- Vestry (2-year unexpired term ending 2025): Marion Myers
- Vestry (3-year term ending 2026): Dr. Sandra Harmon-Weiss
- Vestry (3-year term ending 2026): Cheryl Lukens Oleferuk

On call for further nominations from the floor, there were none. Lawrence Schmidt moved that nominations be closed and that the slate of nominees for the positions of Wardens and Vestry be elected by acclamation. The motion was seconded by Lillian Armstrong. On the question, all voted in the affirmative; there were no nays or abstentions. The Rector declared the nominees elected to their respective offices.

Nominees as Delegates and Alternates for Convention and Convocation were made as follows:

- Diocesan Convention Delegates (1 year): Lillian Armstrong  
Lawrence Schmidt  
Jack Olthuis (from floor)
- Alternate to Convention (1 year): Lisa LaGreca (from floor)
- Convocation (1 year): Lisa LaGreca  
Yvonne Olthuis  
Lillian Armstrong
- Alternates to Convocation (1 year): [No nominations]

On motion by Lillian Armstrong, seconded by Serena Smith, to close nominations and elect the slate of nominees for Convention delegates and Alternates, and for Convocation, by acclamation, motion passed unanimously in the affirmative. The Rector declared the nominees elected to their respective positions.

The Rector congratulated and thanked all of the newly-elected individuals for agreeing to serve in these important positions.

The Minutes of the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting, presented in the compiled reports, were moved for acceptance/approval by Jack Olthuis, seconded by Lillian Armstrong. On the question, the motion was adopted overwhelmingly by voice vote without dissent.

The Rector, noting the submission of all written reports for review, called for a motion to receive the reports. On motion to receive the reports by Dr. Sandra Harmon-Weiss, seconded by Cindy O'Connor, the question passed unanimously.

Rector's Report: The Rector elaborated upon her written report and sermon, which highlighted the points she wanted to share with the parish.

Senior Warden's Report: Jack Olthuis shared comments and drew attention to his written report, enclosed within the Annual Report document. Primarily he expressed appreciation for the members of the Parish and the honor to serve them and Mo. Allison. He noted that since he took office as Warden, the Parish had experienced difficulties and transition, but had persevered and come through them. He remains optimistic for the future "with God's help," knowing that other challenges lie ahead. Although he will be retiring from the Warden's position, he will remain active and will be assuming less onerous duties as the Parish's Treasurer while he and Yvonne take time to travel and relax. There were a number of expressions of appreciation and gratitude for Jack's service and leadership, particularly over the past four years.

Financial Reports were presented by Jack Olthuis, outgoing Sr. Warden, and Lillian Armstrong, outgoing Treasurer. Yvonne Olthuis moved to accept the Financial Reports. Motion was seconded by Cindy O'Connor. Question passed without any nays or abstentions.

The Rector drew attention to the Necrology report (p16), noting the loss of those of the Parish who entered into Eternal Life during A.D. 2022: Dorothy Haig, Fred Maiden, Jr., Ruth Maiden, Elizabeth Hauch, and Robert A. Burns. She also noted services for William Repp and Grace Repp, who died in 2020, but were laid to rest this past year. Those in attendance joined in prayer for the repose of their souls.

The floor was opened for additional comments, questions, or concerns.

- Janice Haines reminded people to sign a card for Cynthia and Lou Schweikhardt as they prepare to move southward.

On motion to adjourn the meeting by Dr. Sandra Harmon-Weiss, seconded by Yvonne Olthuis, the question carried in the affirmative unanimously.

The Rector offered a closing prayer and gave a benediction.

The meeting adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lawrence Schmidt  
Clerk *pro tem*

## **Rector's Report**

**The Rev. Allison Burns-LaGreca**

### **A Year of Peaceful Transformation: The Fertile Ground of Our Faith**

As we look back on the year 2023 at St. Mary's, we find ourselves reflecting on a period marked not by tumultuous changes or grand, sweeping events but by a gentle, steady transformation akin to the soil that has been tilled, settled, and is now ready for planting. This year has been a testament to the quiet yet profound work of spiritual growth, a time when our community, much like settled soil, has become ripe for new seeds of faith and love.

The Bible, our eternal source of wisdom and comfort, speaks to us in various ways about growth, transformation, and readiness. One verse that resonates deeply with our experiences this past year is from the book of Isaiah:

*"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

*Isaiah 55:10-11*

In these words, we find a beautiful analogy for our spiritual journey. Like the earth nourished by rain and snow, our community has been nurtured by the grace of God, the teachings of Christ, and the fellowship of our congregation. The peace we have experienced is not a void or a lull; it is the essential quietness that prepares the heart for deeper understanding and the soul for greater works.

This year, we raised forward Charlene Snyder, who is now completing her second internship, and we welcomed back now-ordained Deacon Jane Carol Wilson. Throughout the year, we engaged in activities that mirrored the tilling of soil. We worshipped and watched in awe as the grace of God and the working of the Holy Spirit grew our Saturday evening Holy Eucharist at the Beach. Our various outreach efforts, programs, and donations: Thursday's on the Lawn, St. Mary's This n' That Thrift Shop, Strawberry Fest, a bake sale, Animal Outreach, Beacon's Animal Rescue, The Branches, C.A.R.A, Catholic Charities, Toys for Tots, Diller Home for the Blind and the Stone Harbor Museum, along with our shared prayer and liturgy with St. Barnabas, through healing services, Stations of the Cross and combined Easter Vigil – our expanded 12 Step groups which have reached now a total of 6 weekly during the summer - one NA , two AA, and three Alanon - our continued relationship with Science Explorers and our new relationship with Seven Mile Island Players. These are not just acts of service or fellowship; they are the ways in which



we loosened the soil of our communal faith, aerating it with love, compassion, and understanding. In these moments, we prepared ourselves, both as individuals and as a community, for what is to come.

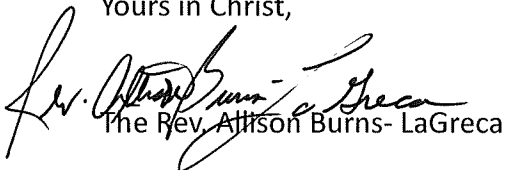
As we stand at the threshold of a new year, we find our community akin to soil that has been tilled and rested; we are ready for the seeds of new challenges, experiences, and opportunities for spiritual growth. The peacefulness of the past year has not been a period of inactivity, but a season of preparation. Thank you to our many new members and those of old whose faith keeps St. Mary's healthy and well. Like the earth that lies fallow, gaining strength and fertility, our faith community has been gathering strength, enriched by our shared experiences and the ever-present love of God. United in Christ and nurtured by His Grace. Beloved, everything is possible in our growing season.

In the coming year, we look forward to sowing new seeds – initiatives that will further our mission, deepen our faith, and extend our reach in the community and beyond. We anticipate not just growth but a flourishing of the spirit, a blooming of faith and love in ways we have yet to imagine.

In closing, let us carry forward the lessons of this peaceful, transformative year. Let us remember that, like the fertile soil, we are now ready to embrace the seeds of God's word, nurturing them into a bountiful harvest of spiritual fulfillment and communal blessings.

May we step into the future with faith, hope, and love, guided always by the light of Christ and the nurturing presence of our Creator.

Yours in Christ,



The Rev. Allison Burns- LaGreca

## Deacon's Report

The Rev. Jane Carol Wilson

Dear Friends at St. Mary's,

It is with pleasure and good will that I write this annual report as your deacon. I am thankful to Bishop French for sending me to St. Mary's and to St. Barnabas on alternate weeks. It is good to be home with Mother Allison and the entire parish.

Since my return as a deacon, I have been busy reacquainting myself with everyone after having served my first internship at St. Mary's two years ago. I have been assisting Mother Allison with worship and also preaching. I have been visiting the This 'n That Thrift Shop, getting to know everyone, plus shopping there.

In December, I led a workshop using the book, "Dog in a Manger" by Tim Schenck as a guide for reflecting during Advent on finding a balance in our preparations for receiving Christ on Christmas. Thinking of how we can reach a balance between the commercial allure of material objects and the true meaning of Christ coming once again into our lives as a babe who will then become our Savior.

One of my favorite things I've been doing is visiting those who cannot attend church in person. What a joy it is to share communion with them and have interesting conversations. It uplifts my spirit to share conversations and hear the stories of everyone at St. Mary's. It was also an honor for me to be able to lead a Deacon's Customary when Mother Allison was unable to be here, and I thank everyone who helped with that service.

I am looking forward to our next year of worshipping together, finding new adventures, growing our parish by welcoming the stranger, showing our gift of hospitality, and serving as a community to help grow the Kingdom of God.

Through God's grace, may we work to bring peace and joy to our church and the world around us.

Faithfully,

Jane Carol Wilson, dcn

## From the Sr. Warden

Lillian Armstrong

Annual Report 2023

Dear St. Mary's parish family,

Mother Allison has covered the spiritual side and Jack has covered the financial side. Well done by both! As your Senior Warden, I will add just a few words in the middle.

Your vestry met faithfully each month, usually on the third Sunday at about 10:30 am after the morning service. Jack provided written financial reports monthly in advance of the meetings, which ensured our meetings didn't get "bogged down in the numbers." Dina was our secretary, providing the minutes from each meeting. Thank you, vestry members, for your service this year.

We had spirited discussions about ways to bring more people and visibility to St. Mary's Stone Harbor. Everyone turned out in force for the amazing Strawberry Festival and the Bake Sale on Sidewalk Sale Saturday, and many joined the Thursdays on the Lawn. We spent a fair amount of time talking about the Thrift Shop, because sales were down rather dramatically in 2023. Our store manager, Debbie Smith, did a great job keeping expenses in check, but profitability was poor. We are moving ahead prayerfully in hope that the re-opening Laundromat next door, with all brand-new equipment, will aid our sales in making a come-back in 2024.

And to Mother Allison's point, it was a quiet year in many ways – at least free from controversy and unexpected disruptions. How nice! While we were sad to see John Curtis depart for retirement in the Adirondacks, what a blessing Curtis McConly is! We never know where his tickling of the ivories will take us during the postlude and that's fun!

I look forward to a 2024 filled with community and prayerful togetherness. A blessed Lent, joyful Easter, blossoming spring and busy summer. How can we top last year's Strawberry Festival? I know we can do it, if everyone plays a part. I also look forward to welcoming Cathy and Allyn onto the Vestry; it's always exciting to bring new folks into the leadership fold. It will be lovely to see our summer parishioners again and hopefully the seeds of peace we've sown in 2023 will emerge in the form of even more participation each week.

I wish to close by thanking all of you who love our little church in Stone Harbor. I know we're all looking forward to a great new year.

With love,

Lillian

## **Greeters Ministry**

2023 Annual Report

Thank you Sherrie Hidalgo, Cheryl Oleferuk, Yvonne Olthuis, Allyn Penkethman, Serena Smith, and Julie Taylor for being conscientious and dedicated greeters in 2023.

Greeters are the first person we meet on entering the church. You represent that St. Mary's is an intentionally welcoming House of Worship.

We appreciate your ministry.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Haines

## **Ushers Ministry**

2023 Annual Report

Bill Handley and I are the two ushers and we enjoy the ministry. We are both senior citizens and I classify myself as a senior senior citizen. I'm not sure this bodes well for the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Haines

## Lay Readers and Lay Eucharistic Ministers

Annual Report 2023

Since the earliest days of the Church, it has been the practice of the Faithful to gather together for worship and prayer, the reading of Scripture, and to join in the Breaking of the Bread around the Lord's table. St. Mary's resumed in-person services in 2022 and has been going strong ever since.

Our dedicated volunteer Lay Readers/Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers of the Parish assist the clergy during our corporate worship at our regular services on Sunday mornings at 9 a.m., our Saturday evening "Worship at the Beach" summer services, and on special feasts and holy days.

Jack Olthuis, Hilton Rodriguez and Lawrence Schmidt serve as Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Acolytes as well as Lectors/Lay Readers. They are joined by William Handley and Cathy Johnson as Readers. Occasionally others assist with readings and prayers at special services.

This past year, Deacon Jane Carol Wilson officially joined our Parish Family after her ordination, assisting Mo. Allison in our liturgy and in pastoral care. If neither of them are available, Lay Eucharistic Visitors are available to take the sanctified Elements of Bread and Wine to our parish family members who are shut-in, hospitalized or otherwise unable to get to church. If you are aware of someone who cannot attend church but would welcome a visit and want to receive Communion, please inform the Rector or Deacon.

I thank everyone involved in this sacred ministry. They and their service continue to bless our Parish community, continuing Christian practices established millennia ago.

We welcome others to join us! If you feel called to any of these ministries, please contact me or Mo. Allison.

Respectfully submitted,

Lawrence Schmidt

Lay Eucharistic Minister Coordinator

## **Morning Star Legacy Society**

Annual Report 2023

Our mission is to Honor the Past, Sustain the Present, and Nurture the Future. Three new stars were added to our plaque last year. You don't have to die to remember St. Mary's. I know of three people who made a bequest to the church before dying.

The only requirement needed to be a member of the legacy society is to be intentional. There is no minimal amount. You just have to notify the church office that you intend to remember St. Mary's. Julie will mail you a form, sign it and return it to the office. A star will be ordered and your name/s will be inscribed and mounted on the plaque.

According to our 2022 Annual Report our total investments totaled \$774,864. My goal is to have one million dollars in Total Investments. Shown in the Annual Report the amount budgeted for Investment Draws was \$100,000. The actual amount drawn was \$55,000.

Had we \$1,000,000 and withdrawing 5%, we would total \$50,000 and probably not affect our principal. A \$5,000 deficit is a lot better than \$55,000.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Haines, Chair

## St. Mary's This n' That Thrift Shop

Annual Report 2023

St. Mary's This n' That continues to be a positive part of our community providing a clean, safe, organized, affordable retail experience for the folks of our community and beyond. This n' That and the community around us continue to face challenges, though challenged we are truly BLESSED.

- We have been awarded Best of Jersey Shore Gold winner for 2022 and 2023.
- We collected needed items for the following organizations. Beacon Animal Rescue, C.A.R.A, Animal Outreach, Catholic Charities and Toys for Tots.
- Our Thrift Shop not only provides an affordable shopping experience, we also provide a needed ear, hug, and direction to resources and services in our community.
- We continue to work with agencies in our community providing work experience and volunteer options - NJ's workforce 55, Cape May County Probation, Jersey Cape Diagnostic Center and local churches and schools needing volunteer hours for their youth.
- We continued to rearrange and organize.

In 2024, we will continue:

- Working along with our community to collect needed items for other organizations in our community
- Continue to recruit new volunteers
- Continue to be the needed support for our community.

All could not be done without the dedication and hard work of our staff, volunteers and the support of Lillian, Mother Allison and the vestry.

I am Blessed, Grateful and proud to be your thrift shop manager.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie Smith  
Manager

## **Treasurer's Report**

### **2023 Annual Report**

After serving five years as Junior Warden and then Senior Warden, I enjoyed returning to the role of Treasurer in 2023. As always, many thanks to Julie Taylor for doing all the real work of keeping the books, paying the bills, and producing the monthly financial reports.

#### **The Budget**

Overall, 2023 proved to be a very good year with respect to the budget. On the income side, you will note from the attached 2023 Budget vs. Actual Budget – 2024 Budget sheet that we exceeded our expected contributory income by over \$2,000. At the same time, we took \$25,500 less from non- contributory sources (investments and Thrift Shop) than we expected we would need. On the expense side, we also did very well against the budget as we spent \$12,263 less than budgeted. So, we lived better than within budget.

Having said that, we must recognize that in last year's budget we expected to rely on non- contributory income at a level substantially higher than contributory income. We expected that almost 58% of our income would come from somewhere other than "the pews". We certainly are fortunate to have our investments and, to a lesser extent, our retail operation, to support the church but our goal has been to reduce this pressure on non- contributory income and the rate of drawdown on our investments. For 2024 I'm happy to report that we expect to fund the church more from contributory than non- contributory income. I'm praying that this will be a reality and a new trend.

With this in mind, please note, that in our 2024 budget we have reduced our expected non- contributory income needs by \$49,000 and our overall spending by \$45,000.

#### **Net Worth**

Because we rely so heavily on our investments to meet expenses, I track our net worth very carefully as it provides an idea of our financial longevity as a Parish. Included in my report is a spread sheet tracking our net worth since 2020. You will note that our net worth at the end of 2023 was \$672,404. During 2023 our net worth went down by about \$35,000 despite us having withdrawn \$134,500 from our investments for general expenses and another \$17,600 for our diocesan loan. The stock market was certainly very helpful to us in 2023.

I should note that if any non-budget expenses arise such as major repairs or equipment needs; we fund those directly from our investments. As noted above, we also pay our diocesan loan, which we took out to renovate the rectory, from our investments. The balance of that loan at the end of 2023 was \$70, 923.



## Pledges

Attached you will also find a sheet showing our 2024 pledges. We received 28 pledges for 2024, this is one more pledge than last year and the total amount pledged was \$89,266, a reduction from last year of \$1,734. If you haven't already, please consider pledging.

If you ever have any questions about our finances, please don't hesitate to ask.

Faithfully,

Jack Olthuis  
Treasurer

## Our Dearly Departed

We remember those who entered Eternal Life  
in the Year of our Lord 2023

Margaret Bennet

Jane Bowers McGuckin

Robert Burns

Margaret Conrad

Stanley Casper

Anne Embody

Elizabeth Hamilton

Elizabeth Jones

David Mascione

Ervel O'Donnell Wylde

Karen Rupprecht

*Almighty God, we remember before You this day your servants, and we pray that, having opened to them the gates of larger life, You will receive them more and more into your joyful service, that they may win, with You and all Your servants everywhere, the eternal victory, and let light perpetual shine upon them, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

## **Closing Prayer for Annual Meeting**

God who has called us to be the church,  
in this place today we have worshiped.  
We have prayed, we have sung,  
we have listened for your challenge.  
In this place today we have met.  
We have talked, we have shared,  
we have made decisions.  
Now our time together draws to a close  
and we go back out into the world.  
As we go out, fill our hearts with hope.  
As we live as followers of The Way,  
embolden us to share our light with the world.  
As we are parts of various communities,  
challenge us to build community wherever and however we can.  
Over the year to come, move within and among this community of faith,  
help us to live up to the goals that have been set before us,  
strengthen us in ways we hope for and in ways we do not expect,  
so that next year we will gather again  
to share the good and the bad,  
to look back on another year past,  
and continue to hope for the years that are to come.  
This we pray in the name of the One whose name we bear: Christ.  
**Amen.**

## **Benediction**

Life is short,  
And we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who make the journey with us.  
So ... be swift to love, and make haste to be kind.  
And the blessing of God, who made us, who loves us,  
and who travels with us be with you now and forever.  
**Amen.**