

Saint Mary's Episcopal Church

9425 Third Avenue
Stone Harbor, New Jersey 08247

The Rev. Allison Burns-LaGreca, Rector
The Rev. Jane Carol Wilson, Deacon

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October 10, 2023

Dear members and friends of St. Mary's,

It's Stewardship Time! Time for the Vestry to assess where we stand financially, and time for you to consider your ability to contribute as a pledging member of our parish.

As most of you know, I joined St. Mary's in 2004 when a career change allowed me to move to the area. Lucky me to live in such a lovely place, complete with a delightful Episcopal Church where I quickly joined the ranks, following in the footsteps of my parents who moved to Cape May County in 1997.

Soon, I was on the Vestry and I recall a vestry retreat during which my father offered one of his infamous pledge analyses. His spiral-bound presentations are almost the stuff of legend, full of bar graphs and pie charts. Now, nearly 20 years later, his voice still rings in my head. "*We'd better be mindful, because the top 10 pledgers represent over 80% of income,*" he'd say. And we had about twice as many pledgers then as we have now.

The fact is, the percentages are just about the same today, and they are no different for St. Mary's than many other churches, charities and non-profits of all kinds. We are blessed with those who have the means to contribute the most, and we are blessed to have those who do their very best to give any amount they can.

We made the decision to hire a full-time priest in 2019, and we are extremely blessed to have Mother Allison. We felt we could do so because we had a good nest-egg to build upon. It was the right decision and she has held us up and together through the pandemic. What a way to start a new job!

And so we entered 2023 with a budget that relied on "other income" to make ends meet. About one third of that "other income" was expected to be generated by St. Mary's This n' That Thrift Shop. Unfortunately, the winter lull in sales was a little worse than usual and combined with the 2023 increase in minimum wage, resulted in a hard hit to their monthly bottom line. The shop didn't reach profitability until August this year. We will need to shore up their account for them to make it through winter, so there will be no "other income" from the Thrift Shop to St. Mary's this year. Hopefully, with some changes, we can rectify that next year.

The fact remains that St. Mary's must draw down from its investments substantially to meet budget, and of course it's not a bottomless well of money. Being one of the reliable pledging members of our church is the best way you can help at this time.

We are asked to give of our time, talent and financial success in the name of God's generosity to us.
Please:

- If you are a pledging member, *consider increasing your pledge by 10%.*
- If you give regularly, but are not a pledging member, *please become a pledging member.*
- If you visit us seasonally, or only on major holy days of celebration, *please consider making a small monthly pledge.*
- If you can, *give of your time in our work within the Cape May County community.*

I guess I really am a chip off the ol' block, because I made you some pie charts. I hope they help you understand the financial picture facing St. Mary's.

Thank you to everyone who faithfully pledges and to all who provide financial support throughout the year.

With love,

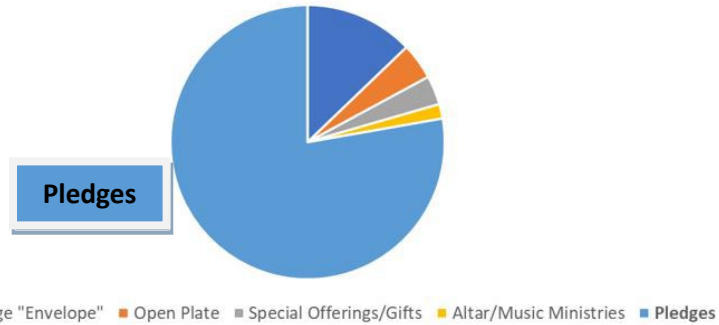
Lillian

Lillian B. Armstrong, Sr. Warden

Understanding St. Mary's 2023 Operating Budget

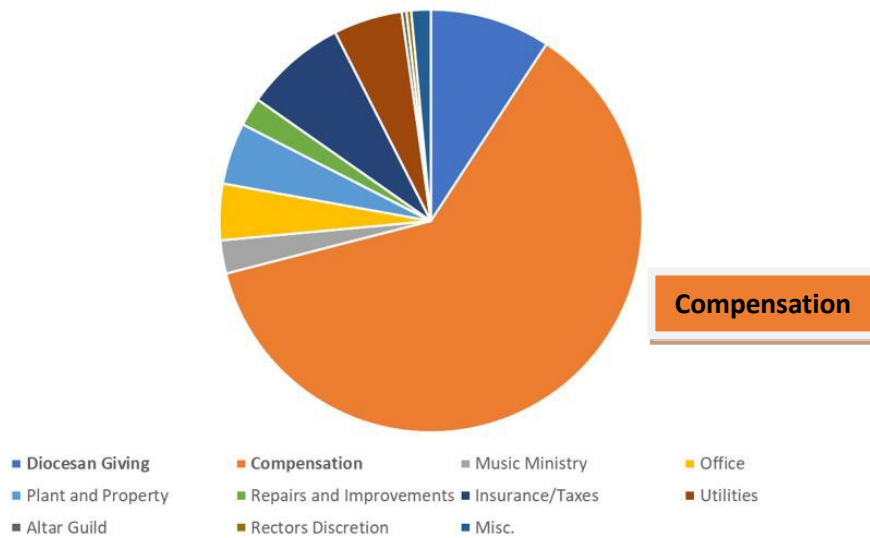
Operating Income

\$116,940



Operating Expenses

\$275,740



\$275,740 Income Required for Balanced Budget

\$159,000 in Investment Withdrawals/Other Income

