



# 2024 Annual Report

## CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Reports of the 281st Annual Parish Meeting  
Christ Episcopal Church, Guilford, CT

February 2, 2025

## AGENDA

- Opening Prayer & Welcome: The Rev. Michael Sweeney
- Call to Order: Senior Warden, Lisa Ste. Marie
- Status of Quorum: Junior Warden, Michael Haggans
- Approval of Minutes 280<sup>th</sup> Annual Parish Meeting: Clerk, Virginia Syombathy
- Priest in Charge Report: The Rev. Michael Sweeney
- Reception of Committee and Officer Reports: The Rev. Michael Sweeney
- Junior Warden Report: Junior Warden, Michael Haggans
- Treasurers Report: Ted Sands, Finance Committee Chair & Interim Treasurer
- Recognitions: Senior Warden, Lisa Ste. Marie
- Leadership & Election Slate: Senior Warden, Lisa Ste. Marie
- New Business
  - Proposed date for 282nd Parish Meeting: Sunday, February 8, 2026
- Adjournment

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Minutes from 280<sup>th</sup> Annual Parish Meeting
- All Saints Name for Remembrance
- 2025 Leadership & Election Slate
- Priest in Charge Report
- Senior Warden Report
- Junior Warden Report
- Youth Faith Formation Report
- Music Report
- Parish Administrator Report
- Seminarian Report
- Committee and Group Reports
  - Acolytes
  - Altar Guild
  - Chili Supper
  - Episcopal Church Women (ECW)
  - Episcopal CT Diocese 2024 Convention
  - Flower Committee
  - Hospitality
  - Lay Liturgical Assistants
  - Outreach
  - Prayer Shawl Committee
  - Tag Sale
  - Ushers
- Stewardship Report
- Finance and Treasurers Report
- 2025 Budget

## 2024 MEETING MINUTES

**280th Christ Church Annual Parish Meeting, February 25, 2024. 1140 Meeting called to order by Susan Leonard, Senior Warden.**

Michael Haggans, Junior Warden, established that we have a quorum and proceed with the meeting. Minutes from the 279th Annual Parish Meeting, February 2023 were accepted and approved.

**Recognitions:** The current Vestry Members were acknowledged and recognized for their hard work in Vestry matters as well as in acting as the Search Committee.

### **Reception of Committee and Officer Reports:**

The 280th Annual Report document for the Annual Parish Meeting is available in the Parish Hall for all parishioners to take and review. Please see these reports for details. Also available at CEC Website.

### **Leaders from each group/organization introduced all members and thanked them for their work.**

Groups included:

Acolytes, Susan Shackford  
Administrator, Robin Penna  
Altar Guild, Katherine Frydenborg  
Buildings and Grounds Committee, Michael Haggans  
Choir, Mark Sullivan  
ECW, Diane Link  
Finance Committee, Ted Sands  
Flower Guild, Vicky Reeve  
Hospitality, Donna Tafel  
Lay Liturgical Assistants, Laura Raymond  
Newcomers, Kay Claiborn, Mardee Moore, Diana Stovall  
Newsletter, Kate Haggans  
Outreach, Caroline Herrick  
Pastoral Care, Mary Anne Osborn+  
Tag Sale, Rose Robinson,  
Ushers, Mardee Moore  
Youth Ministries, Dorota Xeller

### **Report of the Nominating committee for the following offices:**

The following individuals were nominated for the stated positions

Senior Warden – Lisa Ste. Marie  
Junior Warden – Chris Robinson  
Assistant Treasurer – Diane Pierpont  
Treasurer – Ed Seibert  
Clerk – Virginia Syombathy  
1 year Vestry positions – Caroline Herrick, Rob Hutchinson

3 year Vestry positions – Elaine Deveau, David Oshana, Vicky Reeve, Dennis Burke, Gabrielle Johnson  
Conventions Delegates – Gabrielle Johnson for 2 years and Kay Claiborne for 3 years  
Alternate Delegates – none

Nominations from the floor, none. Motion moved to accept all nominees to their positions, motion accepted unanimously.

Susan Leonard and Michael Haggans gave farewell speeches.

**New Business by Lisa Ste. Marie:**

The Sweeney Family will be visiting in Guilford March 14-16, 2024.

There will be a meet and greet open to the congregation on Friday March 15, 2024 from 430 to 630. It will be in the Parish Hall and food and drink will be provided.

Lisa thanked both Susan and Michael for their dedication, MANY hours of hard work, grace and fortitude for keeping our Church going forward during this time of transition. They were presented with flowers and gifts from the Vestry in recognition of all they have done. Lisa also thanked Tony Leonard and Kate Haggans for supporting their spouses during the long transition period.

**The 2024 Budget was presented. A motion was moved to accept the Budget and it passed unanimously.** The 281st Christ Church Annual Parish Meeting will be February 2, 2025. Meeting adjourned at 1220pm.

Submitted respectfully by Virginia Syombathy

**All Saints Name for Remembrance**

Lois Creighton

Cynthia Dwyer

Nancy Sisson

Edwin Ste. Marie

Carrie Taylor

BJ Wellman

Patricia Whiteman

## 2025 LEADERSHIP & ELECTION SLATE

### LEADERSHIP

Senior Warden	<b>Lisa Ste Marie</b>
Junior Warden	<b>Virginia Syombathy</b>
Treasurer	<b>Julie Gibson</b>
Asst. Treasurer	Diane Pierpont
Clerk	<b>Gabrielle Johnson</b>

### VESTRY

2<sup>nd</sup> year (of 3): Dennis Burke, Gabrielle Johnson, David Oshana, Vicky Reeve  
1<sup>st</sup> year (of 3): **Melissa Lamoreaux, Robin Powell**

### CONVENTION DELEGATES

Kay Claiborn (year 2 of 3)  
Gabrielle Johnson (year 3 of 3)  
**Susan Leonard, Alternate**

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

**Kate Haggans, Jennifer Heubner, Donna Lafata, David Oshana**

*\*Names in bold are proposed to be elected. Vestry candidates serve for 3 year terms. Officers are elected for one year terms.*

## PRIEST IN CHARGE REPORT

What a wonderful journey we have been on together this past year. It was almost exactly a year ago that Susan Leonard, then senior warden, shared the news that I had gladly accepted the call to serve as your priest. And I continue to be so glad, so grateful for this calling to love and serve the Lord with all of you. I'm grateful for the warm welcome and hospitality that you have shown me and my family, from our first family visit in March, to my first Sunday here on July 7, to this present moment.

My priority and greatest joy in this my first year at Christ Church continues to be spending time getting to know you all, individually, in small groups, and in larger gatherings. Relationship is the heart of discipleship. The more we love Jesus and each other, the more brightly the light of Christ Church will shine as a beacon for those in our community who are lonely and longing to know the love of God. This has been a year of incredible growth at Christ Church. Partly, that is due to the beginning of a new chapter in our life together, with the arrival of a new priest and the ongoing work of amazing and faithful leaders in this parish. This is exciting for us. AND I pray that the growth we are experiencing here is a part of something much bigger than us. The good news of Jesus Christ is never about us alone; it is "good news of great joy for all the people."

We hear stories of the Church in decline, but, in fact, the combined Sunday morning attendance across the Episcopal Church has *increased* each year since 2021. I believe the Holy Spirit is at work within us and around us, drawing us back to God and to each other, as we grow increasingly weary of the isolation caused by the pandemic, our political and social divisions, and technologies specifically designed to amplify our fear, outrage, and division.

Let me share a few indicators of our growth and new life this year. Our average Sunday attendance was up from 60 in 2023 to 73 in 2024. Breaking that down further, the average attendance from January-June of 2024 was 56. From July-December, it was 90. That growth in attendance is reflected also in giving. Of the 83 pledges so far submitted for 2025, 16 are from families and individuals who are new to Christ Church.

As we grow, we're adding new opportunities for worship, study, and fellowship. In 2024, these new offerings included:

- Weekly Wednesday noon service of Holy Eucharist
- Bi-weekly Sunday afternoon service at Jacobs Beach in the summer months
- 3rd Sunday 5 p.m. candlelight service and supper in the colder months
- Service of choral evensong for All Saints' Day
- Weekly Bible study on Friday afternoons
- Advent study series
- Holiday open house at the rectory
- Occasional brunch for newcomers (the next will be March 2)

The most important signs of the Spirit's work among us are difficult to quantify or even name. Like wind, the Spirit often works quite invisibly, and often through us. It's all the ways you care for each other and our community—words of welcome, notes of encouragement, prayers for healing, calls and cookies and kindness. It's serving the chalice and the chili, seeking and serving Christ in all people.

And the Spirit was also at work in services of baptism and burial. In 2024, we baptized two and buried three at Christ Church. We give thanks for the lives of those faithful servants who have joined the glorious company of the saints in light: Lois Creighton, Cynthia Dwyer, and Patricia Whiteman.

Finally, I'm so grateful for the amazing staff and wardens of Christ Church—for the arrival of our new parish administrator, Linda DePedro; for the expansion of Page Pelphrey's role into director of youth faith formation; for the continued brilliance of our music director, Mark Sullivan; and for the remarkable leadership and service of our wardens, Lisa Ste. Marie, Michael Haggans, and Chris Robinson.

May God continue to give us grace to love and serve God as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.

In Christ,  
Michael



## SENIOR WARDEN REPORT

2024 was a year of tremendous change and growth for Christ Church. After almost two years in transition, we completed the search for a new Priest in Charge. The Rev. Michael Sweeney began his ministry with us on July 7 and is now settled in the refurbished rectory with his wife Briget and three boys, Emmett, Isaac and James. Thanks be to God!

The Rev. Sweeney's first Sunday was well-promoted and attended. Invitation letters were sent out to all members and past members, as well as area clergy and community and government leaders; the Guilford Courier featured Father Sweeney as Person of the Week, and a large banner was installed in the front of the church with service information. The service was followed by the congregation picnic, which usually signals "end of year". This year, however, the message was "let's keep things going" through the summer and beyond – and we certainly did!

Since that Sunday, attendance and activity has been steadily growing. We are thrilled to see new faces as well as returning members every Sunday.

New worship opportunities include casual beach services under the Jacobs Beach pavilion; 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday evening services followed by congregational suppers and Wednesday noon services year-round. New bible study groups include Friday afternoons and seasonal meetings during Advent and Lent. The hospitality committee created beautiful and tasty events, including pasta suppers, family game nights and organized the coffee hour sign-up. Our major ongoing events, like the Tag Sale and Chili Supper, were highly successful and well-attended. Look for even more opportunities for community and worship in 2025!

Our youth program is under new leadership, with Page Pelphrey taking on the Youth Faith Formation Director position in September. The program, for ages aged 3 – high school, now focuses on education, community, worship involvement and service to others. The congregation is delighted to see the older kids serve in church roles at least one Sunday a month. This program continues to evolve (which is exciting) as our numbers grow. We give special thanks to Donna Lafata who continues to support Page and this program so significantly.

In July, we hired Linda DePedro as our new Office Administrator. Linda brings significant operational and administrative experience to the position. She hit the ground running and has made significant improvements to office organization and process. Just as important is her kind and compassionate manner, creating a welcoming environment for members and visitors alike.

We give thanks for the significant time and effort given by former Junior Warden Chris Robinson, who stepped down from this role in the fall. Chris served as Junior Warden during one of the most active times in CEC history. He took on this position as the rectory was in the early stages of significant renovations; he also managed an entire administrative office move to the parish house and oversight of all grounds maintenance and upkeep. We are grateful to Michael Haggans who took over as Junior Warden and will continue involvement as Chair of Building & Grounds Committee.

Kate Haggans also stepped down from her position as the monthly newsletter editor in December. We will miss her beautiful writing style and tremendous energy to gather information. We will continue with the current communications vehicles, including weekly Friday e-blasts, website and bulletins.

The 2025 Stewardship Campaign kicked off in early November; the theme was “gratitude” with a large candle in the sanctuary that served as a reminder and display. Thanks to Vicky Reeve and Dennis Burke for spearheading this effort. We exceeded our goal of \$235,000 and give thanks to all for the support. Please see the Stewardship section of the report for more details.

The CEC Vestry is a committed and caring group. I look forward to our monthly Wednesday meetings, where we work together to guide the operational and spiritual path of our church. There has been an overwhelming amount of logistics and planning to cover in the past several years. We look forward to new visioning work this year that will hopefully create new ideas, programs and goals. My deepest appreciation to all members who served in 2024: Dennis Burke, Elaine Deveau, Caroline Herrick, Rob Hutchison, Gabrielle Johnson, David Oshana, Vicky Reeve and Virginia Syombathy.

Christ Episcopal Church continues to be a member of good standing in the Diocese. We will host Safe Church training on May 31 that will be mandatory for all those in our parish in any kind of leadership position; area churches will also be invited to attend. There are also opportunities to take this training online for those who can't attend on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

I am excited for the year ahead that will be filled with new opportunities to learn, grow, worship and enjoy each other as a church community. Thanks to all who make CEC such a special place.

Lisa Ste. Marie, Senior Warden

## JUNIOR WARDEN REPORT

This was a pivotal year in the life of Christ Church which required an expanded role of the Junior Warden position. Chris Robinson was the Junior Warden until October, at which time, I took over those responsibilities. This was a smooth transition as Chris assisted me in 2023, as I likewise assisted him, in 2024. We are both grateful to have worked together as a team for these past two plus years.

The year was highlighted as the Parish House and Rectory were prepared for the beginning of a new ministry and the Sweeney family. This project was in addition to many other duties and building maintenance tasks.

### PARISH HOUSE LOWER LEVEL

Flooring and painting were completed and the spaces made new for our growing Sunday School and youth programs. Offices were created for Rev. Sweeney and the Parish Administrator.

### RECTORY

Work to prepare the Rectory for Rev. Sweeney and family was extensive. The entire interior was repainted. An additional bathroom was built on the second floor. The safety of the stairs to the second floor was improved. The kitchen was improved with all new appliances while the adjacent room was extensively renovated. Offices were relocated to the Parish House. An exterior deck was added to provide safe access to the backyard.

### LOOKING AHEAD

We anticipate the formation of a Building and Grounds Committee to:

- Prepare a comprehensive review of all buildings and grounds issues
- Develop long-term budgets and priorities
- Advise the Vestry on matters concerning Buildings and Grounds

We anticipate the hiring of a part-time sexton to be present on Sundays and special events to support the parish and we hope to make progress on repairs to the belltower.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Maintaining the buildings and grounds of our parish is the work of many: the wardens, those who serve on committees, those who lend a helping hand whenever the need arises, those who keep an eye out for things that are amiss, and those who make funding available. We are all in this together, and Chris and I are grateful for the opportunity to work with all of you as we prepare for the future.

Michael Haggans, Interim Junior Warden, [jmhaggans@gmail.com](mailto:jmhaggans@gmail.com).

## YOUTH FAITH FORMATION

Youth Formation is off to an amazing start as we continue to grow our numbers. We started in one room and have grown into three groups of preschool/kindergarten, upper elementary, and middle school groups. Parents volunteer to rotate as leaders and Avery LaFata is there every week as the assistant/nursery caregiver. We are using the Weaving God's Promises curriculum, as it works for all ages with modified age activities. The preschoolers love to sing and dance while the olders love a good round of charades. In August we had a board game event in order to get to know Father Michael and in September we sent care packages to our parishioners in college.

Twice a month, the middle schoolers and older elementary students participate in "pick your own" ministries where they learn about the different ministries and volunteer with the altar guild, acolyting, flower arrangements, and ushering to name a few. Our Sunday school girls helped make goody bags for a girl's shelter in New Haven. I am hoping to bring back a few of our excursions and former events: A weekend or day at the Incarnation Center, a day in New York City at St. John's Nightwatch or Trinity and ground zero. I will also be leading a VBS here and a VBS for the diocese in the Dominican Republic.

I want their time in Sunday school or youth events to be a time for them that they enjoy and become part of the Christ Church community. At the end of January, Father Michael and Father Drew will take turns coming to Sunday school. We will continue to pray, learn stories from scripture, participate in church traditions, give back to the community, and sometimes just have fun just because!

Page Newsom Pelphey, Youth Faith Formation Director

## MUSIC

It is a pleasure to continue to work with this group and I am proud of what they accomplish each week. Thanks to our regular members Julie Gibson, Gabrielle Johnson, Vicky Reeve, Elisabeth Oshana, David Jones, and Tony Leonard, and to our newest member, Bill Saviers. We look forward to welcoming additional new singers this year! Thanks also to those who have joined us on occasion, including Carter Bryan, and Beth Stevens—and special thanks to Suky Bryan, whose willingness to step in with her violin or, on occasion, voice, is greatly appreciated!

This past year also saw our first sung Evensong service, for which we joined forces with our neighbors at Trinity Church, Branford. It was a pleasure to welcome them to Christ Church, and also to have the opportunity to welcome singers from the extended Christ Church family who cannot regularly sing with the choir, who this fall included Kevin Sweeney, our own Rev. Michael Sweeney, and Beth Stevens. The service was a success and another Evensong service is planned for early this spring.

The newly-instituted monthly 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday evening service has created another opportunity to welcome musicians to Christ Church. Services this past fall featured Laura Wright, a violinist who teaches at Christ Church during the week. We look forward to welcoming other musicians at future Sunday evening services, including frequent collaborator Steven Mustakos.

A special note of appreciation for our soloist/section leader Leila Mustakos, who raises the level of everything we are able to do and is an absolute pleasure to work with! Her role is essential to the success of our music program.

Our Friday Noon Organ Meditations series continues, and has proved to be some of our newer member's initial introduction to Christ Church. Our 'Fall Bach' series continued this past year with our fourth annual recital, and there continues to be enthusiasm for this yearly organ recital. An additional organ recital is being considered for the spring of this year. The organ has been well maintained and continues in good health! Care has also been taken to ensure that our pianos have gotten the attention they require—special thanks in this regard to Vicky Reeve.

Under the leadership of our new Priest-in-charge Michael, I look forward to another successful and rewarding year!

Faithfully submitted,  
Mark Sullivan  
Music Director/Organist

## PARISH ADMINISTRATOR

As the Parish Administrator, I joined Christ Episcopal Church in June of 2024. With the help of so many wonderful people, I have learned a great deal of the protocols for this position. From managing communications to representing the church in every interaction, whether it's a call, email, or walk-ins, I've welcomed the opportunity of being the face of CEC. The office can be busy throughout the week, with people coming in and calling and I prioritize giving each person the time and attention they deserve. In addition to managing day-to-day and weekly duties, such as some accounts payable & receivable, Sunday service bulletins, weekly eblasts, ROTA and calendar management, my responsibilities also include various annual projects and reports. Since I am fairly new in this role, I understand that there will be many more projects to come. However, I have completed some projects such as Christmas Memorial Flowers, Stewardship Reporting and now working in conjunction with Father Michael to prepare the Annual Report. Upcoming projects include the Parochial Report, Fuel Fund, Easter Season preparation (including mailing), and the Mid-Year pledge mailing to update contributors on their progress.

As I continue to grow in this position, I've been able to meet many challenges due to the support and friendliness from everyone within the parish community especially Mark Sullivan, Father Michael, Lisa Ste. Marie, Diane Pierpont, Susan Leonard, Donna Tafel, Julie Gibson and so many others who have helped me to understand and grow in my position. Their support has been invaluable.

Linda DePedro, Parish Administrator

## SEMINARIAN

Thank you all for your prayers, encouragement, and financial support over these two and a half years in seminary. I am pleased to share that I have begun my final semester—graduation is no longer a distant dream. Praise the Lord!

The start of 2025 has been a whirlwind for me. I recently completed my General Ordination Exams and participated in a cross-cultural experience in Costa Rica with fellow seminarians from VTS. During this time, I immersed myself in daily Spanish classes, explored Costa Rican culture through dance and cooking, visited museums, and stayed with a host family. One of the most profound spiritual moments occurred when we visited La Paz Waterfall Gardens. The waterfalls' sheer power reminded us of the immense power of God and the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit in the waters of baptism. As we prayed, it felt like we were renewing our baptismal vows—a truly transformative experience.

This renewed sense of baptism feels particularly meaningful as I prepare to embark on the next stage of my journey. I am now a Candidate for Holy Orders, and I am thrilled to share that I have been invited to apply for ordination into the Diaconate. I humbly ask for your continued prayers as I wade further into these sacred waters, discerning the call toward priesthood.

Peace and Pura Vida, Diane Kyle

## ACOLYTES

This past year, we said goodbye to four of our current and former Acolytes as they all graduated and went on to a new phase of their life as college freshmen. We wish AJ Lafata, Kenneth Pelphrey, Carter Bryan, and Sam Mayo the absolute best.

We continue to rebuild our program as our newest Acolyte is Emmett Sweeney who joined our current acolytes: Austin Lafata, Aleah Lafata, Jack Trotter, James Oshana, Sarah Oshana, and still to be trained Lucas Malton.

We currently have the youngsters acolyte or take part as ushers and readers on the first Sunday each month, so that they do not miss their important religious class lessons. Acolytes also serve at several special services; this year Father Michael Sweeney had the youngsters take an active role in the Communion part of the service.

We would also like to say thank you to two former acolytes and current college students, AJ Lafata and RT Totter, who took part in our two Christmas Eve Services. We appreciate all the youngsters who take time to serve their Parish community.

New members of the acolyte program might be hesitant when first asked, but once trained, they serve for the first time and gain confidence, along with the grin from ear to ear. Your youngster can be an Acolyte. They must be in at least fourth grade to be a torch bearer; crucifers must serve for at least six months as a torch bearer and be in the sixth grade or higher.

Training is ongoing; if interested in participating, please contact our Parish Administrator, Linda or see Sue C Shackford following the 10 a.m. service.

Special thank you to the parents of our acolytes for getting their youngsters to church early on Sunday mornings so that the youngster can robe, do a couple of run throughs, light candles, and meet Father Sweeney for a short prayer and be in position for the on time start to the service. You are all appreciated.

Note: Over the past years I have coordinated three different fund raisers that all acolytes and other youth of our church participate in. This year we continued the Christmas Wreath Sale and we sold out. We hope to go back to hosting the made from scratch Spaghetti Supper that includes both the main meal and the youth making all the desserts. In August we will schedule the annual car wash. All funds are used for both in reach and outreach programs as well as to help with youth group trips.

Susan C Shackford  
Director of Acolytes

## ALTAR GUILD

It has been a busy year for this "quiet ministry". Thanks to our 6 intrepid members, we met the challenge of supporting our visiting clergy each Sunday, organizing all of the items you see on and around the altar and in the chancel, as well as preparing for major Holy Days. The focus in June was getting the sacristy and robing rooms cleaned, painted and organized for the arrival of Fr Michael and the Sweeney family in July. We continue to grow in our faith and learn wonderful new ways of worship. We also welcome new members to help even with occasional cleaning or polishing!  
Faithfully submitted,

Katherine Frydenborg, Altar Guild Chair

## CHILI SUPPER

The weather was clear and cold and decision was made to hold the event inside. Outside in the courtyard, the youth group set up wreath sale and hot chocolate. Additionally, the Lafata family set up fire pits and seating in the parking area, with lights providing a welcoming atmosphere. Inside the parish hall were long tables set up on the left side, one small square table for cider, six round tables (6 chairs each) in the center, 4 Christmas Market tables along the back, and 2-3 tables on the right for the ECW Cookie Sale. One long table was set up in the Nursery and the Guild Room was also used for overflow.

Prices have remained the same for at least 3 years (\$8/\$5), but costs of ingredients and inflation have risen significantly. 2024 charitable contribution was almost the same as 2022. We may want to consider raising prices in 2025.

We also ran out of chili, so we may want to increase the amounts of ingredients and even consider selling larger containers to go, which can be taken home (1 Q containers). We should think about getting the 16 oz containers and then fill up, leaving space for sour cream/cheese. We should return to the three flavor options: Group Beef and Sausage (spicy), Turkey (mild) and Vegetarian.

Receipts: \$1370

Costs: \$352.16

Total: \$1017.84

Profits will be split between Meals on Wheels and Christ Church Youth Programs (30/70 split)

Susan Tillier, Chili Supper Chair



## EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN (ECW)

The Christ Episcopal Church Women, ECW, met monthly in March-June, 2024 and September-December, 2024 on the second Thursday of those months. Regular business meetings were held in the Guild Room for a business meeting at 10:30 A.M. and a Carry-in-luncheon afterwards. Our Annual June and December meetings were held in local restaurants, June at Quatros, Guilford and December Cafe Fiore in Branford. All Christ Church women are members and are welcome to attend any or all meetings. We had two guest speakers, Julie Harris and Julie Gibson. Also, we met informally in the Guild Room and at member homes, to work on our crafts and Sweet Treats for our table under the window.

This year we purchased a new white chasable and shawl for our new priest, distributed four scholarships, honored four individuals with our annual Pearl of Great Price Award, maintained our active membership at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, enrolled two former ECW members in the cathedral's book of memories, delivered 40 bags of toiletries to Chapel on the Green, collected during our annual Lenten project along with several bags of new socks and underwear, our ongoing project.

Eight of us attended the Annual Connecticut ECW meeting in September and continuing to support their projects. This year we again donated Halloween Treats and filled eggs for the Sunday School annual Easter Egg Hunt. We filled the pantry for our new priest and family, provided snacks for the youth group to fill boxes for our college students and gave two big bags of treats and snacks to the mission in New Haven to help teens turn their lives around. We also honored veterans and first responders with our Carnations For Heroes project.

The funds for the above programs, projects and materials were derived from our major fundraisers, Roses For Mothers, Carnations for Heroes; both are free will donations, Palm Sunday Bake and Craft Sale, Chili Supper & Cookies for Scholarship sale and the continuing sale of Sweet Treats; notecards and cardholders on our table under the window. Our cookies and baked goods projects would not be possible without the generous and continued support of our congregation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diane W. Link, ECW President

## EPISCOPAL DIOCESE 2024 CONVENTION

The Rev. Michael Sweeney, Gabrielle Johnson and Kay Claiborn attended the diocesan convention in the Bristol Event space in Bristol on Saturday, October 26th. The convention was interspersed with liturgy with uplifting music and featured the theme of "Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches."

A number of resolutions were passed, including one to recognize May 5th as Red Dress Day and to invite the Journey of Discovery with Indigenous Peoples Ministry Network to create liturgical resources for congregations to commemorate the day. Red Dress Day, recognized as May 5th in Canada, remembers missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Respectfully submitted,

Kay Claiborn and Gabrielle Johnson  
Convention Delegates

## FLOWER GUILD REPORT

The CEC Flower Guild was formalized in Spring 2024. We are Vicky Reeve, Alicia Bacon, Mardee Moore and Diana Stovall. Our primary responsibility is to highlight the Altar with flowers each week and decorate the church on High and Holy Days. We coordinate flower donations from the congregation, work closely with local florists and enjoy the supremely spiritual moments of coaxing blooms into the brass vases on a Saturday morning. This past year has seen much tidying and sorting of redundant decorations and updating the calendar of parishioners who donate. We extend deep gratitude to Marsha Brown who did this faithfully and all on her own for many years. It is indeed a ministry that needs to be shared. Please consider donating flowers in honor or in memory of a loved one on a Sunday of your choice. Many thanks to Jennifer Huebner, Kay Clayborn and Katherine Frydenborg for their additional help and guidance this year.

Vicky Reeve [vreeve@comcast.net](mailto:vreeve@comcast.net)

## HOSPITALITY

Hospitality was a new committee, or perhaps "reimagined" for 2024 and a first for me. It became much more than providing Coffee Hour after 10am service. Many thanks to all who participated with Coffee Hour by shopping, baking, setting up, decorating & cleaning up each and every Sunday. You could feel the fellowship getting stronger every week.

Hospitality also coordinated two receptions for Father Sweeney and family; one on March 15th and a welcome luncheon on July 6th as well as two funeral receptions on July 12 (Lois Creighton) and August 24 (Cynthia Dwyer).

In the fall we welcomed the wonderful October, November and December 5pm Evening services followed by pasta suppers. Each month the attendance grew.

Thank you to all of the parishioners and friends who helped in so many ways, however, I would especially like to thank the Hospitality team of Co-Chair Susan Leonard, Diane Link, Diana Stovall and Mardee Moore.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Tafel

## LAY LITURGICAL ASSISTANTS

My favorite assignment is to be able to thank each and every member of our lay liturgical assistants for your enthusiastic and capable service throughout the past year at our 10 AM and combined services. Each of you is a much-needed extra piece integral to all our worship services, whether it be in the form of readings, prayers of the people or serving the chalice at Holy Eucharist.

I am continually grateful for the many blessings each of you bestows with your unique talent to the finely woven tapestry of our services. Please continue to add your excellent works to our family of worship throughout the coming year.

If you, or you know of someone in our midst, would like to join our lay liturgical group to read or serve the Eucharist, please let me or Reverend Michael know. We welcome new members throughout the year. I have found more meaning in our services by being a reader. And from what our chalice bearers have told me, they too have found that serving the chalice has added to their feeling of joy and peace.

With many thanks to you all.  
Laura Raymond

## OUTREACH

The Outreach Committee's mission is to assist our neighbors, both here in Guilford and farther afield. Money placed in the change jar, found at the back of the church, helps fund its activities. This year, we purchased four \$25 Big Y gift cards to donate to the Guilford Food Bank and sent a \$250 donation to Episcopal Relief and Development for their Hurricane Relief Fund.

We continue to support the Guilford Food Bank by donations of food, collected in the boxes at the back of the church, as well as gift cards. A big thanks to Tony Piscatelli for collecting the donations from the church and delivering them to the Guilford Food Bank each week.

The Outreach Committee sponsored visits to the New Haven Botanical Garden of Healing Dedicated to Victims of Gun Violence on June 11 and on September 14. The purpose of the visits was to raise our awareness of gun violence in New Haven, show our support for those who have created this amazing space, and build fellowship among parishioners. Next summer, if there is enough interest among parishioners, we may participate in helping to maintain the garden.

In August, we collected 40 lunch boxes which were donated to Guilford Social Services. On September 21, we joined First Congregational Church and North Guilford Congregational Church in walking in the Guilford Parade to celebrate the United Nations International Day of Peace. On October 27, we hosted Chapel on the Green in New Haven partnership with Zion Church in North Branford.

We invited Leonard Jahad, Executive Director of the Connecticut Violence Intervention Program to speak after coffee hour on November 10. His visit inspired us to ask what we as a parish might do to assist him. This resulted in our putting together Christmas gift bags of toiletries and personal hygiene products for 70 girls. The generosity of parishioners on this project, on very short notice, was much appreciated, as was the involvement of Jen McShane, who has spearheaded our contact with Leonard Jahad and his organization.

In December, we sponsored Angels under the Balcony, to collect funds for the Guilford Fuel Fund; the Mitten Tree, to collect warm mittens, gloves, scarves, and hats for Chapel on the Green in New Haven; and the Chili Supper, a portion proceeds go to Guilford's Meals on Wheels. A big thanks to all who worked to make these projects so successful, especially Susan Tillier for organizing the Chili Supper and Rose and Chris Robinson for setting up the Mitten Tree and Angels under the Balcony. The Outreach Committee meets in the Guild Room at 6:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. We welcome new members and new ideas.

Respectfully submitted, Caroline Herrick

## PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

We have experienced great growth since our inception at the 2023 Ministry Fair. Four of us, working independently, have knitted and crocheted shawls and lap robes for those suffering illness, loss of a loved one, hospitalization, injury, and care-giver burdens, as well as happy occasions. We have made 35 shawls and lap robes and given 23. Recipients include parish members, relatives, friends and neighbors. Our work has been blessed and placed in the church hall storage area. Anybody may sign out a shawl or lap robe and take a printed message and optional carrying bag. Rev. Michael has eagerly come on board and is an important part of our ministry. We would like to welcome new members, including those who have difficulty coming to church. We buy our own yarn as part of the ministry but could visit shut-ins to offer companionship and guidance if they can supply yarn. This ministry is a blessing to both ourselves and others.

Respectfully submitted, Jean Allen Courtney

## TAG SALE

It was a big year for the annual Christ Church Tag Sale, both in contributions to the church and in tag sale profits. Prior to our actual September sale, we made substantial contributions to the church. The tag sale team was more than happy to contribute to the improvements that took place over the spring in the downstairs office/Sunday school space.

Contributions were as follows:

\$10,000 to basement floors

\$500 to the purchase and reupholstery of Guild Room Chairs

\$550 for furniture for the Rector's office

\$75 for desk for Administrator's office

\$40 for Nursery Rug (new furniture for nursery was provided by tag sale contributions)

As of September 28, the Tag Sale Account had a total of \$5,172.00. The tag sale was held on Saturday, September 28 and was followed by several events that raised additional funds. Efforts were made to sell additional items on Facebook and Ebay. A pop-up designer bag sale was held on a Saturday morning in November and a Christmas market rounded out the year at the Chili Supper.

The current balance (after tag sale expenses) in the Tag Sale account is \$17,456. The tag sale committee will be meeting in the next couple of weeks to determine where funds can best be

utilized in the future. It is also expected that more money will come in from items that have been distributed to consignment.

Aside from the Tag Sale having become a successful fundraiser, thanks to hours of hard work from church members and an overwhelming amount of tag sale contributions, we also see this event as much anticipated community outreach. It serves as outreach in bringing together both members of our community and members of our church family. It is truly heartwarming to watch Christ Church members come together on the day of the sale to greet and meet folks from our community, and to work together hand in hand to pull off this successful event. We are also excited to be donating some lovely formal gowns to a charity that collects prom dresses and distributes them to needy recipients.

Thank you everyone for your hard work and support,  
Rose Robinson

## USHERS

I would like to thank Kay Claiborn, Carol Iovanna, Diana Stovall and Susan Warner who assisted at the 2024 Christmas Services. Thank you to all the ushers who have done an outstanding job in 2024. We have a very friendly group who does their best to welcome all who attend Christ Church.

The ushers arrive 20 minutes early on their designated Sunday each month. They welcome guests, distribute programs, ring the bell and assist anyone needing special assistance. The ushers are responsible for the offerings and direct the communion. After the service is over, ushers are responsible for cleaning the pews and making sure the rear of the church is left in an orderly state. The ushers committee is responsible for ordering name tags for new members.

Please contact Mardee Moore at email [MHMOORE1234@gmail.com](mailto:MHMOORE1234@gmail.com) if you have any interest in joining this ministry.

Prayerfully submitted,  
Mardee Moore

## STEWARDSHIP REPORT

The year 2024 was a remarkable year for Christ Episcopal Church on the Guilford Green. It was a year of change and growth.

We grew under the leadership of our new priest, The Reverend Michael Sweeney. We experienced growth – in new members, in service offerings which included summer services on the beach, and a new Sunday evening Eucharist candlelight service followed by a well-attended dinner in our fellowship hall. A new Wednesday Communion Service at noon was also added. Additional educational activities have also been increased.

We were also very blessed this year to have grown our Annual Giving Pledge Campaign. We exceeded all our goals through the generosity of our long time and new members. It was a successful Annual Giving Campaign.

Under the direction of Rev. Michael Sweeney, we changed the tone of our annual request from past years. At his suggestion and direction, we focused our efforts on GRATITUDE – giving back for everything we have out of gratitude and thanks! Michael sent letters out (postal and email) to the congregation outlining our request for pledges based on gratitude.

As co-chairs of the Annual Giving Pledge Drive, Vicky Reeves and I followed up with a subsequent communications building on Michael's request. We proposed in addition to gratitude, we should give and support Christ Church financially out of:

- The JOY of coming to Christ Church on Sundays – the beautiful landmark building on the Guilford Green, the music, the fellowship.
- The LOVE we share for one another at Jesus' table, at coffee hour, at social events, at gatherings where we prepare ourselves to reach out into the community and share our love.
- The HOPE for the bright future that lies ahead of us and future generations. What a gift we will leave to our children and our grandchildren!

Vicky and Senior Warden Lisa Ste. Marie brought the creative side to the pledge drive. They designed a large candle that was placed at the children's altar where members could pin up a small flame to acknowledge what they were grateful for in their lives.

Pledge cards were included in the mailings and were also available at the children's altar. Those offering pledges were encouraged to drop their completed pledge cards in a lockbox which was also at the altar. Pledges were kept anonymous – only the parish administrator had access to the box. The pledges were only shared with the church's accounting firm.

In addition, the pledge cards were available online using a QR code. Pledges could also be made online using our secured OSV system allowing users to pledge and make pledge payments online.

Reminders to pledge were also included in the CEC Weekly newsletter. Three members of the parish (Alicia Bacon, Jennifer Huebner, and Bob McNamara) were invited to speak briefly during service announcements about what Christ Church means to them and their decision to pledge.

In addition, notes from parishioners (Donna LaFata, Suky Bryan, and new members Vivika and Gerard DeNegre) were included in the weekly email newsletter sharing their expressions of gratitude.

At the close of the campaign, vestry members shared the task of sending out thank you notes.

**Goals and Results of the Annual Giving Pledge Drive:  
(As of January 21, 2025)**

**2024 Pledge Totals: 76 pledges for \$199,160**

**2025 Stewardship Goal**

**Pledge Goal: 80; Received 83**

**Pledge Amount Goal \$235,000; Received \$242,626**

**Notes:**

**39 or 51% Increase over 2024 Pledges \$ 110,164 (+\$24,304)**

**8 or 11% Decrease from 2024 Pledges \$ 16,950 (-\$6,450)**

**20 or 26% Same as 2024 Pledges \$ 65,600**

**16 New Pledges for 2025 \$ 50,312**

**Total Pledges Received for 2025**

**2025 = 67 + 16 New = 83**

Respectfully submitted,  
Dennis J. Burke, 2024 Vestry Member



## FINANCE & TREASURERS REPORT

2024 was a year of transition from no rector and supply priests to a new Priest in Charge at mid-year. The impact of this change was evident in the monthly financial statements. As attendance increased, so did the Church's revenues. For the year, revenues were up \$15,070 while expenses increased by \$16,364, primarily due to higher Repairs and Maintenance and Insurance expenses. Thus, the Church showed a loss for 2024 of \$8,960, which was \$1,016 over budget. While it is true that the Church showed a loss for the year, the momentum has clearly changed with the second half of the year showing significant improvement.

The Church's liquidity position, which we define as the sum of the Church's checking, saving and brokerage accounts, remains adequate. Liquidity was down \$78,544 in 2024 compared with 2023, but that decrease should be viewed in light of the \$147,366 that was spent in 2024 on Major Improvements.

### Endowment

In 2024 the Church's endowment, which is managed by the Diocese, provided a total return to the Church of 15.6% which was composed of 4.5% cash provided for operations and 11.1% increase in the value of the endowment principal. While it was good that the endowment increased in value during the year, the 15.6% total return was disappointing compared with broad market measures like the S&P 500 Index which was up 25%.

### 2025 Budget

The 2025 Budget reflects a full year's expenses relating to a full time Priest in Charge. Before we called a new priest, we prepared a seven-year outline budget which showed expected losses in the first few years after the new priest began work. As the congregation continued to grow, these losses declined and changed into gains. The purpose of the "Fund for the Future" was to provide funding to cover the expected operating losses in the early years of the new priest's tenure and to cover the costs of the Rectory renovations.

The 2025 Budget shows an operations loss of approximately \$45,000 which is right in line with the seven-year forecast. Due to the funds received from the Fund for the Future program, the Church has more than sufficient cash to fund this deficit.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Sands  
Finance Committee Chair and  
Interim Treasurer

Ed Seibert  
Treasurer Emeritus

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
				1/23/2025 rev.	Audited Actual 2023	Budget 2024	Unaudited Actual 2024	Budget 2025
4								
5				Income				
6				General Purpose				
7				Loan Forgiveness, PPP				
8				Total Pledge Payments & Prior Cash	252,842.94	200,000.00	218,892.12	240,000.00
9				Plus Pledges Prepaid in Prior Year				
10				Net Pledge Income	252,842.94	200,000.00	218,892.12	240,000.00
11								
12				Non-pledge Offering	18,740.00	20,000.00	10,054.94	7,000.00
13				Donations	2,626.13	2,500.00	2,711.05	2,500.00
14				Easter & Christmas	2,097.70	2,000.00		2,000.00
15				Fund Raisers - Church			797.25	500.00
16				Memorial Gifts				
17				Music Program Support	424.00			
18				Flowers & Specials	1,676.69	1,500.00	2,243.85	2,000.00
19				Plate Offering	4,871.00	6,000.00	7,901.20	8,000.00
20				Sunday School Offerings				
21				Use of Church Properties	11,920.50	14,000.00	10,878.00	12,000.00
22				Grant, Forgiveness of PPP				
23				Fund for the Future				
24				Income from Investments	35,902.21	32,000.00	39,870.01	38,000.00
25				Total General Purpose Revenue	331,101.17	278,000.00	293,348.42	312,000.00
26								
27				Expenses				
28								
29				Diocesan Pledge	25,486.08	27,793.50	27,376.68	33,110.00
30				Transition Exp			10,543.65	
31				Salaries & Related Expenses				
32				Sabbatical Reserve		600.00		
33				Payroll Processing Fee	1,644.37	1,750.00	1,758.39	1,750.00
34				Clerical Education		925.00	884.31	1,850.00
35				Housing Equity Allowance				
36				Employee Mileage	472.81	364.00	304.85	365.00
37				Medical, Dental, Life Insurance		196.00	500.00	500.00
38				Nursery Helper		260.00		350.00
39				Pension Premiums	-1,542.05	12,934.49	14,447.44	26,088.92
40				Rector's Professional Exp. (Mileage)		520.00		1,000.00
41				Rector's Discretionary Fund		1,200.00		1,200.00
42				Rectory Utilities (100% Rector Comp.)	3,749.18	4,000.00	5,826.95	8,000.00
43				Vacation Bible Sch./Music Camp	31.74	0.00	329.82	
44				Supply Clergy	12,547.19	6,500.00	3,892.57	1,000.00
45				Supply Sunday School	159.46			
46				Supply Clergy Travel				
47				Supply Organist		312.00	112.73	300.00
48				Student Intern				
49				Salaries	53,892.52	108,260.44	101,731.61	152,817.29
50				Rector & Staff Payroll Taxes	13,827.71	12,428.25	17,754.61	20,350.59
51				Total Salaries & Expenses	84,782.93	150,250.18	147,543.28	215,571.79
52								

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
					Audited		Unaudited	
				1/23/2025 rev.	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
					2023	2024	2024	2025
53				<b>Church Programs</b>				
54				Adult Christian Ed.	2,450.25	2,000.00	2,644.75	500.00
55				Auditing Services	7,050.00	3,500.00	3,700.00	3,800.00
56				Choir / Special Music	4,679.00	5,000.00	4,509.00	5,000.00
57				Sunday School & VBS Supplies	1,160.10	1,200.00	1,457.42	2,000.00
58				Fundraising - Church	46.80		32.65	
59				Administration				
60				Other Expense	105.00	300.00		
61				Professional Expense				
62				Petty Cash				
63				Outside Printing				
64				Uncollected Pledge Allowance				
65				Postage	1,601.40	2,000.00	1,958.34	2,000.00
66				Publicity & Communications	376.62	500.00	1,054.34	1,500.00
67				Telephone/Internet	4,457.60	4,500.00	3,564.75	3,700.00
68				Office Supplies	5,079.72	5,000.00	9,510.82	6,000.00
69				Bookkeeping Service	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,200.00	5,200.00
70				General & Finance / Professional / Bank Fee	961.73	1,000.00	1,661.02	1,700.00
71				<b>Total Administration</b>	<b>17,582.07</b>	<b>18,300.00</b>	<b>22,949.27</b>	<b>20,100.00</b>
72								
73				Hospitality	670.90	1,200.00	3,271.46	3,750.00
74				Newcomers Ministry		500.00		750.00
75				Stewardship		800.00	447.87	500.00
76				Outreach & Pastoral Care		0.00		500.00
77				Altar Flowers / Special Services		350.00	1,285.25	1,700.00
78				Altar Supplies-other	1,986.01	2,000.00	1,890.34	1,500.00
79				Youth Program				
80				Bible Study Coordinator				
81				Rector Search Expense	92.00		395.00	
82				Growth Program		5,000.00		1,500.00
83				Transition Expenses		12,000.00		
84				Church Programs Other			360.00	
85				<b>Total Church Programs</b>	<b>35,717.13</b>	<b>51,850.00</b>	<b>42,943.01</b>	<b>41,600.00</b>
86								
87				<b>Plant Expenses</b>				
88				Insurance	15,602.56	14,870.00	20,091.75	18,000.00
89				Interest Expense			19.56	
90				Maintenance Supplies	1,339.21	1,500.00	389.43	750.00
91				Organ & Piano Maintenance	545.00	1,000.00	1,356.00	1,400.00
92				Church Repair & Maintenance	9,452.74	5,000.00	16,278.21	5,000.00
93				Rectory Repair & Maintenance	16,701.60	2,500.00	600.00	2,500.00
94				Grounds Maintenance	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,027.40	3,000.00
95				Contract Maintenance				6,000.00
96				Other Repairs & Improvements	1,475.00		4,109.07	1,500.00
97				Maintenance Fund Reserve		1,200.00		
98				Outside Cleaning	9,072.71	9,000.00	12,240.00	12,480.00
99				Utilities - Church	11,579.30	18,000.00	15,810.88	16,500.00
100				<b>Total Plant Expenses</b>	<b>68,768.12</b>	<b>56,070.00</b>	<b>73,922.30</b>	<b>67,130.00</b>
101								
102				<b>Total Parish Expenses</b>	<b>214,754.26</b>	<b>285,963.68</b>	<b>302,328.92</b>	<b>357,411.79</b>
103								
104				<b>Net Operating Income / Loss</b>	<b>116,346.91</b>	<b>-7,963.68</b>	<b>-8,980.50</b>	<b>-45,411.79</b>