



ST. MICHAEL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



The Annual Report for 2023

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 28, 2023



PARISH STAFF

The Reverend Mary D. Lindquist, *Rector*

The Reverend adwoa Wilson, *Assistant Priest*

The Reverend Lars Hunter, *Deacon*

Jeanie Crosby, *Parish Administrator*

Keane Southard, *Director of Music*

John Laamanen, *Sexton*

Darlene Rutnik, *Financial Administrator*

The Reverend Jean R. Smith, *Priest Associate*

The Reverend Phillip Wilson, *Priest Associate*

WARDENS & VESTRY

Annie Landenberger, *Senior Warden, class of 2024*

Christine Hart, *Junior Warden, class of 2025*

Paul Gallagher, *class of 2026*

Cary Gaunt, *class of 2026*

Steve Guerriero, *class of 2024*

Susan Heimer, *class of 2026*

Alan McBean, *class of 2024*

David Treadwell, *class of 2025*

Rosie Wojcik, *class of 2025*

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

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ST. MICHAEL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH

Sunday, January 28, 2023

AGENDA

Call to Order

Annual Meeting Slide Show

Opening Prayer

Verification of Quorum

Appointment of Clerk of the Meeting

Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting

Reports Received by Title

Report from Rector and Acknowledgements

Report from Assistant Priest

Report from St. Michael's Refugee Ministry

Report on Building Hope for the Earth

Report from the Senior Warden

Report from Treasurer

Report of the Nominating Committee

Candidates for Vestry & for Delegates to Diocesan Convention

Adjournment

St. Michael's Episcopal Church
16 Bradley Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
Via Zoom Videoconference
January 29, 2023
2:00 – 3:40 p.m.

1. Call to Order

The Rev. Mary Lindquist called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.

2. Opening Prayer (The Rev. Mary Lindquist)

Following the prayer, The Rev. adwoa Wilson, our assistant priest, provided protocol and instructions for using Zoom during this meeting.

3. Annual Meeting Slide Show

4. Verification of Quorum

Adwoa declared that 69 households, enough for a quorum, attended via the Zoom videoconferencing system.

5. Appointment of Clerk of the Meeting

Carol Beninati was appointed clerk of the Annual Meeting.

6. Acceptance of Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting

THE PARISH ACCEPTED THE 2022 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES with the following correction: Judy McGee's name should not have an "h".

MOVED: Judy McGee SECOND: Brian Morgan MOTION PASSED

7. Reports Received by Title

The parish approved reception of the reports by title as printed in the Annual Report

MOVED: Jeanette Landin SECOND: Ricky Davidson MOTION PASSED

8. Report from Rector and Acknowledgements

Mary thanked:

- Sr. Warden Annie Landenberger and noted the many ways she helped this year, particularly with communications and Becoming Beloved Community.
- Jr. Warden Christine Hart and appreciated her building project experience and her roles in Building Hope for the Earth and the Capital Campaign.
- The Vestry, especially the outgoing members, Rebecca Olmstead, whose background as a school nurse was particularly useful during COVID, and in helping us with pastoral care; Jared Rediske, particularly for his meticulous attention to detail; and Nancy Ames, a tremendous leader, particularly in her Vestry service with the Refugee Ministry.
- Bruce Lawrence, who served as our treasurer for the past three years. Mary welcomed Tom Cain who will step into the treasurer's position as Bruce steps down.
- Carol Beninati, Vestry Clerk.
- The church staff:
 - Parish Administrator Jeanie Crosby
 - Director of Music Susan Dedell

- Sexton John Laamanen
- Financial Administrator Darlene Rutnik
- The Rev. Jean Smith, particularly for her work with the Refugee Ministry
- The Rev. Philip Wilson, particularly for Building Beloved Community, Adult Forum, and preaching
- Retired Bishop Tom Ely, especially for filling in with preaching.
- Galen Robinson and Tian Ragle for managing the “Church in the Cloud” technology.
- Assistant Priest adwoa Wilson for the many ways she serves the parish, especially her work with Becoming Beloved Community.
 - Noting adwoa’s many services to the parish, as well as what is currently her one-year contract, Mary feels that St. Michael’s needs to continue to have a part-time priest in a stable (three-year) position.

9. **Report from the Treasurer**

There was a separate budget meeting at 9:00 today.

At the Annual Meeting, Treasurer Bruce Lawrence highlighted:

- 2022 YE Operating Budget Summary
 - We brought in more income than anticipated
 - We also spent slightly more than anticipated
 - It was a good year financially, and all expenses were met without loans or incurring long-term debt
- 2023 Projected budget: Bruce, Darlene Rutnik, Jeanie Crosby, Mary Lindquist, and Tom Cain collaborated to produce the 2023 projected operating budget:
 - \$375,000 income
 - \$360,000 expenses

10. **Report of the Nominating Committee on Candidates for Vestry and for Delegates to Diocesan Convention**

- Jared Rediske spoke for the nominating committee, consisting of the three outgoing members of the Vestry (himself, Rebecca Olmstead, and Nancy Ames).
 - Jared presented the three Vestry candidates to serve three-year terms:
 - Cary Gaunt
 - Paul Gallagher (who greeted the meeting participants and expressed how honored he was to serve)
 - Susan Heimer (who spoke briefly to express her enthusiasm)
- Mary asked whether there were further nominations. There were not.

Motion to approve slate of new Vestry members:

MOVED: Jared Rediske SECOND: Nancy Ames MOTION PASSED

- Delegates to Diocesan Convention (presented by the Rev. Mary Lindquist):
 - Liz Vick and Craig Hammond
 - Carol Hesselbach Alternate
 - Sr. Warden Annie Landenberger

Motion to approve Diocesan Convention delegates:

MOVED: Ricky Davidson SECOND: Jeanette Landin MOTION APPROVED

11. **Stories from the Field**

- Susan Gantt, from Seattle, recorded a video message which we watched. She originally came to our Church in the Cloud from Seattle through her friendship with Daniel Dobson and emphasized that it is possible to feel spiritual connection through our online community.
- Jonathan Davis reflected on his involvement with the Building Hope for the Earth campaign. He praised the persistence, dedication, and collegiality of the group—Cary Gaunt, Chris Chapman, Vince Johnson, and Steven Meyer. The project involved working with 19 contractors.
- We heard from John Michael Longworth of Rutland, VT, a spiritual director and social worker, who is another Church in the Cloud participant. He and his wife Sara take notes on Mary’s sermons and send her their bullet points!
- Craig Irvine talked about Breakfast with the Psalms. He appreciated that the Psalms are not just prayed but discussed. He also praised adwoa’s skills and sensitivity as a teacher.
- Kim Peavy talked about how she was drawn to the Becoming Beloved Community effort and St. Michael’s deep exploration of racism, discussed within a foundation of love.
- George Moore spoke about the Refugee Ministry. He stressed that while there are several organizations involved, St. Michael’s “carried the load” and the outcome would have been very different without our parishioners’ efforts. He praised the persistence of the refugee ministry members and noted that at least four new members of the parish have joined primarily because of our commitment to this ministry. He considers all this hard work to be not charity but reparations. He noted the “secondary trauma” of feeling the struggle of the refugee families, but also the love and the connections formed. George reflected that the Afghans come from a place where there’s more of a sense of community, extended families, etc. He feels privileged to be part of their community and to help create community for them in their new home.

12. **Report from St. Michael’s Interfaith Refugee Ministry**

Jeff Lewis followed up on George’s comments with some history (since July 2021) and a progress report on the ministry.

- He noted that what was supposed to be a measured flow of various refugees into Vermont became a flood when the U.S. pulled out of Afghanistan.
- This is the first time in 100 years that the town of Brattleboro has grown in population.
- There have also been a few refugees from Eritrea and Guatemala, and others are coming in soon.
- Now that the Afghan refugees are settled, the Refugee Ministry has formed a Transitional Advisory Committee to assess the “way forward”, the next step.
- Jeff thanked the parish for the various forms of their support to the ministry.
- In response to a question from Jared Rediske about where the Afghan community can engage in spiritual connection, Jeff noted that one of the first refugees to arrive is an Imam and that Centre Congregational Church has provided space for Muslim worship.

- Margery McCrum noted that when Daniel Dobson, Jean Smith, and George Moore laid the groundwork for St. Michael's participation in refugee resettlement, they only planned for one family. We ended up engaging with six families. She expressed the parish's deepest gratitude to the organizers.

13. Report from the Assistant Priest

The Rev. Adwoa Wilson, Assistant Priest, acknowledged all the people who are connected to us but either couldn't be in today's meeting or couldn't show their faces on screen. Adwoa called out two parts of scripture, one offering "Glory to God" who can do infinitely more than we can do alone. She called to mind part of this morning's reading where we are urged to "Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with our God." She also emphasized the value of opening ourselves to vulnerability—our own as well as that of others. Adwoa stressed that vulnerability can be an "access way" to God and expressed the potential in this community because we're willing to acknowledge vulnerability in our "siloed" culture. She acknowledged that there are people in our own congregation who are vulnerable, and people trying to hold faith when everything else falls apart. They have a ministry among us within the body of Christ.

ADWOA PROPOSED A COURTESY RESOLUTION:

That the Rev. Mary Lindquist is amazing and deserves a standing ovation for her hard work among us.

MOVED: Judy McGee SECONDED: Christopher Wesolowski MOTION PASSED

14. Closing Prayer (Mary Lindquist)

- Mary gave thanks and prayed for us to have courage and to stand alongside the vulnerable.

15. Adjournment:

MOVED: Judy McGee SECOND: Christine Hart APPROVED

The annual meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Beninati
 Clerk of the Vestry
 St. Michael's Episcopal Church
 16 Bradley Avenue
 Brattleboro, VT 05301

Rector's Report

Life is not measured by time. It is measured by moments. — Armin Houman

How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. — Annie Dillard

Every year I wonder how best to reflect on the year that has passed. This year has been such a mix of joy and sadness, gratefulness and grief, love and tragedy. Therefore, I've decided that instead of trying to summarize the year that has passed, I would share some significant moments in our life together as St. Michael's.

- **Saturday evening, January 14** – This was the evening we all gathered to give thanks for Susan Dedell's ministry and to say goodbye to Susan & Paul. The Undercroft had been transformed from its utilitarian character to a beautiful and festive party space. The music and the tributes were beautiful, but what I remember most is the Choir School kids who came together again after three years of pandemic to sing together, cry together and offer Susan their love. It was a profound testament to the power of music and leadership to form and support our youth.
- **Sunday, early morning, April 9** - A few hearty souls gathered together before sunrise to participate in the Easter Vigil. The moon was almost full and there was a real sense of quiet and holiness as we lit the Paschal candle and made our way into the dark church. We had experienced an amazing Holy Week together – full of a greater depth of participation thanks to Team Holy Week. We were also in shock because of the brutal murder of Leah Rosin-Pritchard on the Monday of Holy Week at Groundworks.
- **Weekend of May 5-7**– On Friday, the church was abuzz with people preparing for our annual Tag Sale. The choir was gathering to meet Music Director candidates. Many St. Michael's folks were at Gallery Walk in town to invite people to participate in the Weaving Love for Groundworks project. On Saturday, we opened our doors for our Tag Sale, which was an amazing gift of love to our community with proceeds going 100% to Groundworks and the Windham County Heat Fund. There were so many people working and volunteering with such a sense of delight and joy. Then on Sunday May 7 with Bishop Shannon, we celebrated 13 people who were confirmed or received or who re-affirmed their baptismal vows. What a joyful, energetic, Christ-filled weekend!
- **Sundays, August 6 & August 13** – We celebrated many additions to our staff! We welcomed Keane Southard to be St. Michael's new Music Director. We also thanked Patty Meyer for her wonderful and faithful service to St. Michael's during our long search. We also welcomed Lars Hunter to be St. Michael's official deacon.
- **Wednesday evening, August 23** – It was a hard spring and summer for our town. We experienced an uptick in crime and violence in our neighborhoods. In addition, because the pandemic housing funding was coming to an end, many people in our community lost their homes. We were faced with a sense of urgency about how to respond to our neighbors in need of housing and services. We had been approached by Groundworks to host a port-o-potty on the church grounds. After some hard conversations, the Vestry decided against this idea. However, we knew that we were called to respond to the need in our midst, so we came together on Wednesday evening, August 23, to share our feelings of heartbreak, fear and sadness about the state of our community and to begin to discern what was “ours to do.” It was a balm to come together and share prayer,

concern and ideas about possible ways our church could be of greater service to our community. And the conversation and discernment are continuing into 2024.

- **Tuesday evening, October 17** – We came together on for a Service of Prayer and Lament for Israel and Palestine. Hamas had attacked Israel ten days prior. I came together with John Lent and Nicholas Porter to plan this time when we could lament the violence and the deaths of our siblings in the Holy Lands. John Lent, former Executive Director of the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, had preached at St. Michael's on June 18. In his sermon, he described the amazing ministry of the al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza. Tuesday afternoon, prior to the service, the hospital was bombed. It was one of the saddest days I can remember. The only solace was being able to be together in our grief.
- **Sunday mid-day, October 29** – On this day, we celebrated the (almost) completion of the first phase of the Building Hope Project and the completion of the Common Room Project. Both of these events marked accomplishments of the initiatives began in 2021 – the Building Hope for the Earth Initiative and the Becoming Beloved Community Initiative. It was wonderful to look back at our history and witness ourselves making history through the energy transformation of our buildings. It was joyous to come together, eat good food, reflect and give thanks for all that God has done through us!
- **Sunday, December 24** – Advent in the morning and Christmas Eve in the evening! It was a long and good day. I was so thankful to be present for Christmas Eve after two years of Christmas Covid. We were blessed with many enthusiastic kids participating in the pageant and a full church just like pre-pandemic times.

WORSHIP

Holy Eucharist, Morning Prayer or Antecommunion was celebrated on 52 Sundays.

The Wednesday weekday Eucharist met in person weekly on 52 Wednesdays.

During 2023 we offered 51 weekly Contemplative Services Thursdays at 5:30 pm, on Zoom and in the chapel.

We held Saturday morning Centering Prayer every Saturday of 2023.

There were no baptisms in 2023.

There were 9 people Confirmed (David Baxendale, Anne Black, Laura Johnson Frey, Robin Manning, Christopher Meyer, Patty Meyer, Tian Ragle, Asa Taggart, Sherril Wilson), 4 people Received (Steven Guerriero, Craig Irvine and Shiva Shankaran) into the Episcopal Church and 1 person who reaffirmed their baptismal vows (Ed McCatty) on May 7, 2023.

Holy Communion was brought to residents in 3 nursing homes every month.

The Burial office was conducted for Ken Neilson and Richard Burtis.

Morning Prayer was prayed daily on the weekdays for all of 2023.

Average In-person attendance in 2023 was 114 per Sunday. Average Livestream attendance was 34 unique devices per Sunday.

ASSISTANT PRIEST

In December, with great joy, I celebrated the first anniversary of my priestly ministry. It has been a joy to share this ministry with you and with others beyond our walls.

At St. Michael's, my ministry continues in much the way I described last year. The spiritual and worship practice of this place is very important to me and, I maintain, the beating heart of the rich ministries of service that flow out of it. My regular Sunday presence, approximately every 3rd week, continues to be an invaluable way to stay connected to the spiritual and relationship rhythm of this place.

In 2023, in addition to Sunday services and my rotation at Wednesday eucharist, we expanded our commemoration of Lent. It began with an Ash Wednesday liturgy of penitence outside of The Works. A hearty and hale group of parishioners exhausted the number of printed bulletins. A few passersby came later in the morning to receive ashes to go. It was a wonderful witness of joy, sorrow, and sincerity of faith to those around us, and the local paper was there to memorialize it! We also had a robust Holy Week in which I celebrated eucharist daily in the chapel. The chapel was full every day, demonstrating our deep hunger for spiritual fellowship with each other and God.

The Ash Wednesday service on Main Street grew out of the presence we have continued to develop at The Works as the psalm group continues to meet weekly. New faces are always welcome to this Wednesday morning gathering, which grows richer over time. The group has become a waypoint for various people from beyond the parish as well.

In the fall, we discerned that the 'outward facing' element of my ministry would grow to include companionship with the Loaves and Fishes ministry. It has been slow going for me to establish a regular rhythm as I adjust to other new responsibilities. Nonetheless, about once every three weeks, I am able to spend a few hours with the volunteers and patrons of Loaves and Fishes. It has been a wonderful way to participate in the concrete work that they do, hear more about the lives and faith of some of our most dedicated volunteers, and connect with members of the wider Brattleboro community. I look forward to regularizing and deepening my companionship of this ministry.

In this past year, I have also been the Vicar for Discipleship and Formation through the Green Mountain Online Abbey. Originally, the role was envisioned as a way to offer formation opportunities to the broader diocese. However, with the retirement of the deacon who had been doing the administration of that space, I have become the priest-in-charge as of the fall. It has been wonderful to cast vision in that community, guide and design worship, and develop new leaders for the community that includes faithful daily pray-ers from many parishes across the state, including our own, and beyond. This has been a part of Bishop Shannon's visionary leadership, as she started the ministry to bring us *closer together* under the circumstances of COVID.

As many of you read in The Guardian, the diocese received a \$1,168,000 Lilly grant to develop Communities for Spiritual Vitality. Jeanie and I spent a great deal of the spring working on this proposal as our side hobby! If you are not aware of what a treasure of wisdom, skill, and pastoral heart we have in the front office, let me take this moment to say how truly blessed we are. Thank you, Jeanie!

Developing and running this program will be my 2/3 time job alongside my ongoing work at St. Michael's. Through the program, clergy will support small cohorts of lay leaders in spiritual renewal and translating this growth into their parish leadership. It is a wonderful emerging collaboration with the diocese of Massachusetts and a way for isolated parishes to begin to see and share the strength among us. I look forward to sharing some of the richness that has been developing here more broadly and to sharing with you some of the richness that is emerging from the faithfulness of smaller communities around us. As you can imagine, stepping into a new ministry identity with so many hats has various challenges. I am learning how to be more responsive to communication, more balanced as a human being, and more discerning about 'what is mine to do.' I mention this because these challenges, failures, and vulnerabilities are all part of how we leaders witness to you the genuine contours of the Christian discipleship we each work on in our individual lives. Thank you for the grace of those of you who may have experienced hurt by these imbalances in my ministry.

Lastly, a word about being a diocese: Bishop Shannon frequently calls Vermont a diocesan household. The idea, of course, is that we are bound to each other in a way that is not peripheral. In a real way, to call the diocese a household is to say that the parish is simply *one room* in the house. But without the rest of the house, we are not complete. As a fairly vibrant parish, it could be very easy for us to see ourselves as complete without the rest of the house. Even if this were true, we all know how painful it can be when one member of a house decides that they need not attend to the household.

At diocesan convention, we heard about difficulties around race, class, communication and governance issues experienced by the Bishop and within the diocese. This was a shock to some of our delegates. I am pleased to say that more transparency has emerged this month and opportunities for conversation will be forthcoming, including one hosted here at St. Michael's on March 10, 2024. However, it is important to say that we can remain connected to the pulse of our household by simple measures. You can

- subscribe to [The Mountain](#);
- download and pray with the [diocesan cycle of prayer](#) (perhaps even checking out the website of each ministry as it appears);
- pray once a week with [the Green Mountain Online Abbey](#) (to see the faces and hear the concerns of others).

We staff hope to do better at informing you all of things we hear from the diocese. However, it is up to all of us to support and learn from our fellows across the State. I am grateful that my own ministry here and in the diocese will give me an opportunity to develop this awareness and commitment among us.

In Ministry and in Christ, Shalom, adwoa+

DEACON

I began as Deacon at St. Michael's on August 1, 2023. It was agreed that I would perform the liturgical duties of a deacon at the 10:15 service, and also at 8 when I'm preaching. My role at St. Michael's also includes my ministry in pastoral care, particularly my training and expertise with grief.

My diaconal ministry in the world will continue at Brattleboro Area Hospice as the Bereavement Program Coordinator and as a guardian ad litem for Windham Superior Court.

I am responsible for serving the bishop when she does a visitation to a church in southern Vermont on a Sunday. She also included a request that I help with the education of licensed lay ministers across the diocese, and I look forward to seeing how this unfolds.

I'm excited and honored to be serving at St. Michael's with such a vibrant and welcoming congregation. Thank you for this opportunity to serve Christ together.

The Reverend Lars Hunter



Reports from Worship Ministries

ALTAR GUILD

- Altar Guild is a behind-the-scenes ministry which is a combination of housekeeping, handling holy items and beautifying God's house.
- Twelve active Altar Guilders rotate weekly once a month in teams of 2 or 3.
- Members include: John Byrnes, Kiersten McKenney, Judy Walker, Carol Hesselbach, Sue Dyer, Craig Newbert, Charlene Kemp, Rebecca Olmstead, Jane Sbardella, Sherry Stimmel, and Marie Lawrence, our 12th member who arranges and coordinates our weekly flowers and during Christmas and Easter. Chris Hart and Joanne Patalano joined us for Team Holy Week.
- Work bees were held before Easter and Christmas to polish brass and silver. An extra meeting was held in September.
- New members are always welcome. Please speak to a member of the Altar Guild or Jane Sbardella (Jane.Sbardella@gmail.com).

Jane Sbardella

THE DAILY OFFICE

Every weekday morning at 8 am, between 3 and 9 people gather in-person and on Zoom to pray Morning Prayer together. St. Michael's has been praying the Daily Office of Morning Prayer since 2018. We meet in-person in the Chapel on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, with a Zoom option. We meet exclusively on Zoom on Mondays and Fridays. We rotate leadership of the Morning Prayer, asking participants to help be "the congregation" and read the scripture lessons appointed for the day. We read the appointed prayers, but also have a robust time to bring our own personal intercessions and thanksgivings before God. Sometimes we sing or chant, sometimes we

include spiritual readings. We are generally done by 8:30 am every day. It is a wonderful practice and a great way to start our day. New people are always welcome! Thank you to prayer leaders Teresa Saval, David Hayden, Judith Reichsman, Nan Tierra, adwoa Wilson, Shiva Shankaran, Mary Lindquist and Yoojin Lee. – *Mary Lindquist*

CONTEMPLATIVE CHRISTIANITY

The Contemplative Ministry at St. Michael's continued its weekly Thursday Contemplative Service and Saturday morning Centering Prayer. The Thursday service involves chanting, Lectio Divina and silence. The Saturday morning Centering Prayer involves two 20-minute sessions of sitting in silent meditation together, interspersed with five minutes of walking meditation. Many thanks to John Daly, Jean Smith, Caroline Hammarlund, Kim Peavey, Mary Lindquist, Barbara Lee and Margit & Jack Lilly who have taken turns leading these services.

SACRAMENTAL HEALING

“Rise and go; your faith has made you well.” Luke 17:19

As followers of Christ, we believe that we are called to continue his ministry of healing. Healing takes many forms—physical, as well as spiritual, and emotional—and healing is an important part of the church's ministry.

Healing reconciles people to God. A fundamental reason and hoped-for outcome of a healing ministry is that people's lives are changed by a healing of soul and mind, rather than curing of ailments. Healing, through prayer, facilitates and shows concern for spiritual wellbeing and the wellbeing of the whole person with reconciliation of individuals to God. The team of prayer companions from our parish feels called to this ministry in support of those who request prayers of healing for themselves, for others, and in thanksgiving. Everyone who comes for prayers is also anointed with oil that has been blessed by the bishop. The blessed oil is sent to each parish at the end of the Diocesan Convention in November.

The sacrament of healing at our church is scheduled on most Sundays. At the 8 o'clock Service, it follows the service proper. At the 10:15 o'clock service, it is available during communion and after the service proper. All confidential prayers are held in the Chapel. No prayer request is too big or too small. We know it may not always be easy to come forward, whether it is for the first time or the one hundredth time.

This year, we convened a book study group (Avery Brooke, “Healing in the Landscape of Prayer”) with generous support from Rev. Mary. Several members of the study group felt a call to further their relationship with God through training to become Lay Healing Ministers. Our team is blessed to have them. Towards the end of 2023 one may have noticed two prayer partners in the chapel, one being the established healing minister, the other a healing minister-in-training (shadowing). We will continue with monthly meetings, orientation and practicum into this year 2024.

Come, share your burdens and joys feel the strength of the Holy Spirit surround you through the power of prayer.

The Healing Team: *Janet Cramer, Judith Hildreth Junkins, Greg Lesch, Jeff Lewis, Margit Lilly, Carolyn Taylor-Olson*, and Discerning (in training) members: *Anne Black, Barbara Evans, Renee Skwirz, Sher Wilson, MJ Woodburn, and Susan Marshall*.

MUSIC AT ST. MICHAEL'S

January-August – by *Mary Lindquist*

The Music Director Search Committee began their work in October of 2022. Although we hoped to find a music director to come on board by the time that Susan Dedell retired, our work took longer than we expected! We are so thankful to Patty Meyer for stepping in for six months as our Interim Music Director. Patty, with her deep background in church music and leadership, did not miss a beat in leading the choir and the congregation during the interim time. She also led us through a particularly energetic Holy Week – all while continuing to work full time for Green Street School. Thank you so much, Patty!

Thank you also to Karen Guthrie (Chair), Greg Lesch, Susan Heimer and Jenny Karstad who worked tirelessly to find our new music director. We are so pleased to have the new energy and vision of Keane Southard to lead St. Michael's music program for years to come.

August – December -- by *Keane Southard*

As the new Director of Music at St. Michael's, I've only been in the position for less than half of 2023, but it certainly feels like a lot has happened since I began back in August! Much of the past five months for me has been filled with learning about how the music program has operated in the past, getting used to the workflow, the liturgy and the quirks of the organ, and meeting and getting to know the many people who are involved with making music or who enjoy listening to the music at St. Michael's.

In addition to the regular music performed at the 10:15 Sunday services by myself and the choir, there have been two more notable musical endeavors since I arrived:

- In early December, we had our annual **Advent Lessons and Carols service**, where our choir (including a handful of singers who are not currently regular members of the choir) sang a beautiful, ambitious, and varied set of five anthems. I'm grateful for the choir's hard work in putting together a beautiful service, and also, honestly, I am a little relieved to have my first Lessons and Carols service in the books!
- One of my goals as Director of Music at St. Michael's is to encourage and enable all who want to participate in making music to be able to do so, no matter their ability level. With that in mind, in October I started a **weekly optional choir rehearsal on Thursday nights** that focuses on teaching and developing musical skills, including reading music, listening and ear training, and vocal technique. We held five such sessions before we paused it to use that time for extra rehearsals for Lessons and Carols. So far, we have averaged around ten people each week with a fairly equal mix of regular choir members and other members of the congregation. I'm planning to resume these sessions later in January 2024.

Here are a few things to look forward to for the music program in 2024:

- We are beginning to discuss **launching our reincarnation of the Choir School**, which will likely happen in the fall. I have lots of ideas on how we might be able to incorporate elements of MLK's philosophy of nonviolence into the music instruction for children, which was the focus of my doctoral dissertation. I'm looking forward to this opportunity to put some of that into practice!
- I am also hoping to **compose at least one or two new short choral works** of my own for the choir to sing in this coming year, as well as a new organ prelude or postlude as well. We already performed my "Lord, Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace" for St. Francis Day in October, and I also premiered a new organ prelude based on "Silent Night" on Christmas Eve as well as my own organ arrangement of George Whitefield Chadwick's "Noel" on Christmas day. I look forward to creating more unique music for St. Michael's.
- Before I had arrived, the Vestry had approved some **significant repair/improvement work to be done on the organ**. I have met our organ builder and maintainer, Larry Nevin, several times and he has fixed some minor issues already, but he should be starting on this more major work soon. Since I have arrived, many people have told me it has been wonderful to hear the organ used to its fullest extent again, and I'm looking forward to it sounding even better after this work is completed.



Reports from Christian Formation

CHRISTIAN FORMATION/ADULT EDUCATION

The **Adult Forum** is designed to be an informal drop-in opportunity to gather and deepen our understanding of our Christian faith and practice. Happening between the two services, Adult Forum is one place where the people from the 8 am service mingle with the people who go to the 10:15. We are thankful for all our presenters and the robust attendance in 2023. Here's what we hope we do.

Mission Statement

We will offer a diversity of topics covering:

- different interests (outreach, scripture, contemplative Christianity, spirituality, tradition, community interests, etc.),
- experiences of faith,
- the basics of Christianity and the Episcopal Church (for both those new to the church and those who want to rediscover their roots) and
- specialized topics (for deeper understanding)

In the context of:

- small, high-commitment/confidential small group offerings,
- open, low-commitment offerings (forums), and
- a balance between content and discussion.

All offerings are to be connected to our context (Christian, faith community); all topics should ask the question, “How does this connect to our faith?” or “So what?”

As we plan for future Adult Forums, please contact the committee with ideas, offerings, and recommendations. We’d love to hear from you.

Your Adult Forum Planning Committee: *Janet Cramer, Mary Lindquist, Annamarie Plubar, Carolyn Taylor-Olson, Ruth Tilghman, David Treadwell, Phillip Wilson*

CHRISTIAN FORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Christian Education for children and youth continued to build back to its pre-pandemic levels with many new children. We are so grateful for the dedication and faithfulness of our adult volunteers who lead this ministry with passion and love!

PAGEANT MINISTRY

In December nearly three dozen youth ages 2 months to 17 years participated in the annual Christmas eve pageant to share their own Vermont version of the Nativity story. The numbers were the greatest we’ve seen in years, and the event at the 4 pm Christmas eve service was full of joy, spirit, and a few impromptu script revisions.

The pageant is always a team effort with the help of parents, grandparents, our rector Mary and, new to the event, our music director, Keane. Once again, Miranda Smith managed costumes and angels while Lydia Taggart led youth group members, assets to the production lending support, experience, fine performances, and solid role modeling for the younger set.

New players are always welcome, as are new ideas and team members. It takes a little doing and commitment on the pageant players’ part to create the St. Michael’s pageant, but in the end the hard work pays off—with a little help from the Holy Spirit. If you’re interested in joining in let me, Miranda, or Lydia know. *Annie Landenberger*

GODLY PLAY

“GODLY PLAY is a place for children: To be themselves. To learn how Christians live in community. To come closer to the mystery of God’s presence. To learn the stories and language of the Christian people.”

St. Michael’s program for preschoolers and lower elementary-aged children meets during the first half of the 10:15 service. Volunteer “Doorkeepers” help build community as kids gather in the Preschool

Room, which offers a variety of irresistible play things, and then move to our actual Godly Play Room for a story, followed by “wondering time” and response. The stories, told according to a Montessori approach developed by Sonya M. Stewart and Jerome W. Berryman, feature three-dimensional objects in baskets or boxes. “Storytellers” match ecclesiastical imagery and language with these memorable props.

Despite the challenges of welcoming different ages of children and different families from week to week, the dynamics of the group have been very positive: friendships are being made and expectations for the use of room and materials have been quickly understood.

Supporting the children/families beyond Godly Play time this year included a “Welcome Back Party,” requesting reserving some front pews for families, providing bags of toys with children’s activities for use during the service (special thanks to Liz Vic for sewing new ones), and involving children in the service, especially to participate in the final blessing at the end.

Ecumenical, Inter-Faith, Inter-age connections were begun this year with Judith Reichsman and Susan Heimer sharing a few of our Old Testament Stories with the Hebrew School at the Brattleboro Synagogue.

Doorkeeper and Storyteller volunteers are welcome and needed. Please speak to any of our Godly Play Team to learn more about this special ministry!

-Susan Heimer, Miranda Smith, Judith Reichsman, Judy Davidson, Jane Sbardella, Rich Cogliano, Liz Vick

HOLY MAYHEM/YOUTH GROUP

Last Winter and Spring, Lydia Taggert and Lise Sparrow led the Middle School-aged group "Holy Mayhem". We engaged in many fun and educational activities. In January we went sledding. Then we learned about the country of Jordan from the Taggerts' friend who is from Jordan. He and his children showed us a slideshow and talked about their travels there. They also brought authentic/homemade Jordanian foods for us to enjoy. Next, we had a visit from the Jerusalem Peacebuilders and we learned about their important work. In the Spring, we assisted with the annual parish Easter egg hunt. We learned about Judaism from a rabbi in April, and we wrapped up the year with a drumming lesson with Jeanette and Chris Landin!

This Fall, Ricky Davidson joined Lydia to form a new group for Middle AND High School-aged youth. Our first meeting was a brainstorming session to determine what we would like to tackle as a group this year. Next, we learned about the important and interesting work of Jess Mattson with a demo and lesson on how she trains service dogs. Our group raked leaves for parishioners in October, and in November we held a coffee hour bake sale and raised \$389.75, which we used to purchase Christmas gifts for the kids of Groundworks Shelter! We also donated plates of baked goods to Loaves and Fishes. In December, Youth Group members participated in the annual pageant as narrators, singers, actors, and tech crew! It has been a fun and productive year!

Lise Sparrow, Lydia Taggert, and Ricky Davidson

CONFIRMATION

In 2023, adwoa Lewis and I finished a year-long Confirmation Class for high-school aged youth. We met once a month, read “My Faith, My Life: An Introduction to the Episcopal Church” and participated in a winter retreat. For our retreat, we visited the Metanoia Community in Thetford, Vermont and participated in a Benedictine rhythm of life – prayer, work, community meals. It was a snowy and wonderful weekend!

In May, two of the five youth decided to be confirmed by Bishop Shannon. The other three youth decided they would like to wait to confirm their baptismal vows until they had more clarity about their faith. *Mary Lindquist*



REPORTS FROM MISSION AND MINISTRY

OUTREACH MINISTRY

‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food? We saw you thirsty and gave you something to drink? We saw you a stranger and welcomed you? We saw you sick and took care of you? We saw you in prison and visited you? “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Matthew 25:37-40. Episcopal Relief & Development Mandate. “Joel’s Prayer”

Mission Statement: The Outreach Ministry of St. Michael’s Episcopal Church initiates and supports efforts through which we, committee and parishioners alike, can manifest our Christian beliefs by helping those in need, locally, nationally and internationally through charitable organizations. This work involves not only our “treasure,” but also our “time” and “talents.” Distribution of our resources is limited to meeting needs for heat, shelter, health, and food insufficiency.

Outreach began the year with a modest MLK Service Day which produced a number of Bags Of Basics which were distributed among Foodworks, Loaves & Fishes, and the Springfield Correctional Facility. Outreach also benefited from a \$15,000 allocation from our Vestry. We also welcomed Maida McKenna and Deacon Lars Hunter as new members of our team.

Outreach and the Tag Sale Ministry continue to work in tandem, in that each committee has a representative on the other committee. Sherry Stimmel is the Tag Sale Ministry representative to Outreach. Additionally, the Tag Sale Ministry has invited Outreach to nominate a second recipient for the Tag Sale proceeds each year. The two recipients this year were Groundworks and the Windham County Heat Fund.

We resurrected the traditional Pancake Supper on Mardi Gras and the Parish Breakfast on Pentecost Sunday.

After a successful Mothers' Day Diaper Sunday (3,826 and several packets of wipes), the Thanksgiving Diaper Sunday was even more successful with a record count of 8,293 diapers that were divided between Foodworks, Parks Place in Bellows Falls, and Loaves & Fishes, where our Afghan neighbors are able to access them. Yet again, some parishioners donated money rather than diapers, and the additional \$540 was used to purchase still more diapers for Parks Place and Loaves and Fishes.

In October, Outreach hosted Richard Davis, the founder of Windham County Heat Fund, and Sheila Humphreys, Director of the Haiti Orphanage Sponsorship Trust, for an adult forum. Richard gave a detailed explanation of the workings of the Heat Fund and answered many questions. Sheila spoke about the increasingly dangerous conditions in Haiti and how Pastor Duckens and the Orphélinat Evangélique suffered even more horrendously in 2023. The country is now effectively controlled by internecine gangs. The international community is unable and/or unwilling to help, despite the pleas from the ineffectual Haitian government. The Outreach Team voted to send the entirety of its international budget and to supplement it with the remnants of its disaster relief fund to help the children at the orphanage.

Outreach is always ready to receive new perspectives. If you are interested in joining the Outreach Ministry, feel free to contact one of the Committee members: *Janet Cramer, Susan Wilson, Lori Palmer, Shirley Hodgdon, Judith Junkins, Jeanette Landin, Alix Fedoruk, Sherry Stimmel, Maida McKenna, Joyce Vining Morgan, David Treadwell, Lars Hunter, and Brian Morgan.*

Over the course of the year, the Outreach Team voted to distribute funds at its monthly Zoom meetings and staggering disbursements so as not to overwhelm the Church budget. A comprehensive summary of distributions follows:

Sources:

Vestry allocation:	\$15,000
Donations:	\$ 1,524
Total:	\$16,524

Distributions:

International:

Orphélinat Evangélique	\$ 5,000
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National:

St. Thomas Clinic, NOLA	\$ 2,500
Christ Church, Montpelier	\$ 2,500

Local:

Groundworks	\$ 2,662
CASP	\$ 500
Putney Food Shelf (diapers)	\$ 200
Diapers	\$ 1,254
Loaves & Fishes	\$ 1,900

Total:	\$16,516
Deposit to emergency fund	\$8

Respectfully submitted,
Brian Morgan, convener.

PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

The Pastoral Care Team continued to meet most months through 2023. We reached out to those who were in need of care through visits, Eucharist, meals, prayer shawls and transportation, as available. We tried to re-organize the transportation ministry for people who needs rides to church or to medical appointments. We welcomed Lars Hunter, our deacon, to help take the lead in this ministry and we are planning many exciting opportunities for 2024. We will miss the tremendous gifts of the Reverend Jean Smith, who has done so much for caring for people at St. Michael's. Many thanks to the dedicated and generous members of the Pastoral Care Team: *Betsy Bates, Lindsey Boss, Judy Davidson, Jenny Karstad, Mary Lindquist, Margery McCrum, Joan Pinilla, Jane Sbardella, Jean Smith, Ruth Tilghman and Lars Hunter.*

CHRIST CHURCH GUILFORD

The Christ Church Guilford Society is alive and well! An active Board of Directors meets regularly to tend the beloved Mother Church of St. Michael's and plan future events that will benefit our wider community.

Over the past year, as we were preparing to host events in our beautiful 1817 building, we learned that there were structural issues that made using the church unsafe. We embarked on a major effort to assess the damage, raise funds, and solicit bids for the work (mainly on a few sections of the roof). We worked closely with Brattleboro-based Stevens and Associates and have received a generous Vermont Historic Preservation grant for matching funds. We prepared two major fundraising mailings, wrote articles in several local newspapers to inform our neighbors about our activities, used our new website (<https://www.christchurchguilfordsociety.org/>) as the public face of our efforts, made improvements to the grounds and the building's security, and joined the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce. We were able to collaborate with the Christ Church Cemetery Association and the Guilford Historical Society on initiatives of mutual interest, and we remain fully engaged with Friends of Music at Guilford.

We have formed a small Task Force to plan events that can be successfully held outdoors at Christ Church next year as we hire contractors, roofers and others to do the necessary repairs to the interior. We look forward to keeping the St. Michael's community up-to-date on our progress, and we are extremely grateful for your talents and labor as well as your moral, spiritual and financial support!

Board of Directors, The Christ Church Guilford Society, Inc.: *Valerie Abrahamsen, Andy Burrows, Jack Lilly, The Rev. Mary Lindquist, Kate McGinn, Edmund Meade, Anne Montgomery, and Linda Rice.*

OVERFLOW SHELTER MEALS MINISTRY

In keeping with a long-standing tradition, the parishioners of St. Michael's this year once more demonstrated their selfless generosity by preparing homemade dinners for residents at a Brattleboro shelter—the Groundworks Drop-In Center on South Main Street—where the homeless find relief. The speed with which the sign-up sheet was filled, in fact, once it had been posted in the Common Room, was astonishing. It is our hope that when Covid subsides completely, we will again also be able to help serve the meals we prepare. Nothing can quite replace the personal contact that allowed.

Our dinners—delivered this year on the first Thursday of each month, from October through April—are designed to feed about thirty-five, and typically include: a hot pasta dish such as lasagna or macaroni and cheese; a tossed salad; bread and butter; whole milk; and dessert. By April, we expect to have helped nourish 245 people in this way.

We are devoutly grateful to the volunteers who sustain this ministry. There is no more direct way to help those in need than this. If you would like to know more about participating, please contact Benson Bobrick at shiloh98@sover.net or Liz Vick at ebethvick@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted, *Benson Bobrick and Elizabeth Vick*

SCHROEDER FUND COMMITTEE

Members: *Ruth Tilghman, Susan Heimer, Jack Lilly, Rosie Wojcik, Pam Carr and Alix Fedoruk*

Education: The Education Fund was used to support a youth confirmation class and a youth confirmation retreat in 2023. The Fund also allowed St. Michael's to bring in a special preacher for Pride Sunday, support Swords to Ploughshares, and support the writing of the Lilly Grant for Congregational Vitality.

Total for Education: \$2,462

Outreach: The money allotted for outreach goes to support the Help Fund, whose mission is to keep people in their housing and to help others obtain housing. We also give our time by serving on the Help Fund Committee. We meet through Zoom for the Help Fund meetings on Wednesdays at noon. All the social services agencies in the area can attend. SEVCA (Southeastern Vermont Community Action) runs the meetings and is treasurer. The Help Fund gives grants up to \$250 to individuals and families for: housing deposits, back rent, car repairs, and back utility payments. The goal is to keep families and individuals housed. At the weekly meeting, requests for grants are vetted. This is important because other agencies who may know more information about the person who is requesting, and we will know if the request is viable. The first of the year there were fewer requests for housing help because so many people were housed in hotels. This changed in March of 2023 when the motel program started to release people from the motels. Now at the end of the year, money for Help Fund has become smaller. There were car repair requests so people could get to work and medical appointments and requests for back utility bills. After much discussion, money for storage unit rentals was not available.

Help fund received \$8567

Total for Outreach: \$8567

Ruth M Tilghman

LOAVES AND FISHES

The Mission and work of Loaves and Fishes: “To feed anyone who is hungry and food insecure.”

Jack Lilly has finished his one-year term on the steering committee. David Treadwell and Ruth Tilghman still serve on the committee. **We need a new volunteer from St Michael’s to serve on this joint mission with Centre Church.**

In May of 2023, the need for feeding people in the whole Brattleboro area was doubled with 2 factors coinciding: the restaurant meals program ceased and more people became unhoused.

Over the summer, the Food Bank struggled with the supply of food as their supply chains became scarce. Through grants we were able to supply our refugee market, and through a CSA grant we were able to secure fresh produce. Supplies from local stores also helped. Project Feed is a source of funding as well as Mission and Outreach from both churches. And we are always thankful for our individual donors.

On Tuesdays and Fridays:

- 50 meals are sent to Groundworks
- 40 boxed meals are delivered by Becky Anderson to Foodworks to also serve the homeless.
- 45 bags of groceries are bagged up Teri Robinson and Pam Carr to be given away. Frozen and fresh food are also supplied with the bags of groceries.
- Food is distributed in boxes to Dalem Chalet, Colonial Motel, High Rise apartments, Quality Inn, Comfort Inn, Hayes Court and individuals. Our delivery team of Jane Sbardella, William Stearns, Steve Faure, Lloyd Graf and Brian Morgan fill up their cars and often do it in 2 trips.
- Families in Hospice are delivered meals.
- 80 to 150 meals are served out the door of Centre Church.
- Diapers from Mission and Outreach are always appreciated. The Food Bank also donated free women’s products.
- With grants, donations and money and food from the Food Bank as well as NAACP, we have been able to provide our Afghan families and our newer refugees with food particular to their dietary requirements including Halal meat and fresh vegetables, eggs and milk from Miller Farm.

Ruth M Tilghman

PRISON MINISTRY

St. Michael’s continues its biweekly services to the Southern State Correctional Facility in Springfield Vermont, one of the state’s six prisons. The ministry team includes leaders Gabriel Sistare and Cliff L Wood who conduct services and sermons and Ron Bos-Lun, a teacher at the Compass School, who leads the music which the men really enjoy. A Reflection time on the sermon provides a time

for the men to discuss their feelings and reactions. A significant number of the inmates are indigent and have no support from family or friends.

Highlights of the year include:

- Nineteen participated in the Christmas Eve Service and really enjoyed the caroling.
- Over the last five years, St. Michael's has provided over 5000 paperback books and many puzzles, and board games.
- St. Michael's also provides new socks, underwear and several changes of clothes to inmates who are released and have no outside support.
- St. Michael's parishioners have also donated generously to purchase much needed toiletries each month. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

Our team thanks our parishioners for your prayers and support. If you would like to be involved in this rewarding work, please contact Gabriel or Cliff.

The prison is also interested in persons providing courses, lectures and seminars for inmates. Currently Wylene Wood and Michelle Bos-Lun teach a writing course to a small group of very interested students. The volunteer coordinator would be happy to discuss your interest with you.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND DONATIONS. Both are important to this special ministry.

Cliff L. Wood, Liaison for Prison Ministry

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS REGARDING SUPPORT FOR BRATTLEBORO'S UNHOUSED RESIDENTS

Between August and December, Mary and our Vestry hosted at least three conversations about ways we could better support those who are unhoused, live in the Groundworks shelter on South Main Street, in transitional housing at Great River Terrace and the Dalem Chalet, outdoors in their own improvised tent sites, by couch surfing or in their cars. While there was significant discussion about supporting Groundworks Collaborative in its work, many of the ideas expressed in these meetings went further. Such as: what can we do on our own to find housing for those in need, both short term and long term? How can we support ancillary programs such as Loaves and Fishes or Foodworks, unmet meal needs at the shelter on South Main Street, or where can I step in to help if I'm not a skilled professional or even paraprofessional.

Below are several activities taken by our parish and by our parishioners to support this effort.

- St. Michael's Youth Group hosted coffee hour after a Sunday 10:15 service and raised approximately \$390 used to buy Christmas presents for kids through Groundworks.
- Our May Tag Sale raised \$6,000 that was then donated to Groundworks.
- Our Outreach Ministry Team donated \$2,662 to Groundworks.
- A number of parishioners have begun to volunteer at Foodworks.
- Every year for each of the 7 months between October and April, St. Michael's parishioners cook and deliver upwards of 38 meals to the Groundworks South Main Street shelter.

- Discussion is underway with Groundworks staff about unmet meal needs at the South Main Street shelter and how we can help.
- A major effort was launched to help a family find rental housing. Unsuccessful so far, the search continues.
- There's interest in creating an oral history project interviewing our homeless friends and documenting and highlighting their life stories.
- A team of eight parishioners spent half a day sorting through up to 70 plus bags and bins of clothing and belongings, unclaimed by shelter residents over the past year, to be washed and recycled or reclaimed, however possible.
- In October we organized another team of eight which for over eight hours emptied Morningside House, site of last April's staff tragedy, so it can now be redesigned and repurposed for future shelter use.
- Adwoa Wilson, St. Michael's Assistant Priest, began providing pastoral presence at Loaves & Fishes twice a month.
- There has been increased support and awareness of St. Michael's ministry with Loaves and Fishes.
- There is a small group of parishioners exploring the possibility of opening a home for women with children who are in need of housing.

Craig Hammond

TAG SALE MINISTRY

The St. Michael's 2023 Tag Sale on May 6, 2023 was again a hybrid version of the pre-Covid Tag Sales. All of the jewelry, housewares, linens, books and food were downstairs in the church, in the Undercroft, set up in a way which made viewing the merchandise easy and not too crowded. The clothing, shoes, furniture and sporting goods were outdoors under tents, and looked and felt very festive.

Lots of people stood in line to browse and shop! As before, most of the merchandise (except jewelry, food and furniture) was available for a donation (no set price), and customers were encouraged to "take what you want and leave what you can." People were very generous! This sale was definitely a financial success, bringing in slightly over \$10,000 in donations.

This income was distributed in the Brattleboro area community to 2 excellent programs which serve the local unhoused and/or low-income population: \$6000 to Groundworks Collaborative, which offers shelter, food and other services to people who are in need, and \$4000 to the Windham County Heat Fund, which provides fuel assistance for local people.

The members of the Tag Sale Ministry wish to thank all the willing volunteers who joined us once again and helped make this sale a success! Truly, without all your help with donating, cooking,

sorting, hauling, carrying, moving, setting up, selling, and cleaning up afterwards, the Sale wouldn't be possible. The 2 best aspects of this Sale are the amazing community-building that takes place around it and that our St. Michael's community, in coming together, really helps to make a difference in our larger community for folks who could use the help.

The organization which will be receiving all the proceeds from the upcoming 2024 Terrific Tag Sale on Sat., May 4, is Loaves and Fishes, a meals and refugee food market program in Brattleboro led by our own Ruth Tilghman. We will begin accepting clothing, linen and housewares donations in mid-February and furniture and larger items in the beginning of April.

We welcome new members to our Ministry, either as full-time members (we meet once a month or as needed from October until May) or as helpers for sorting /setting up/ running the Tag Sale in the spring. Please contact Liz Vick if you are interested in more information!

Respectfully submitted, *Liz Vick* with *Becky Anderson, Betsy Bates, Charlene Kemp, Lori Palmer* (representing the Outreach Ministry), *Joan Pinilla, Linda Rice, Jane Sbardella, Sherry Stimmel, and Rosie Wojcik.*

ST. MICHAEL'S REFUGEE MINISTRY

2023, the second year of co-sponsoring five families from Afghanistan, was one in which we continued to support families who needed more help in their journey to self-sufficiency in Southern Vermont.

Here is a brief snapshot of those we sponsored starting in early 2022:

- An extended family of six: mother with three children, her brother and their first cousin. All are awaiting reunification with loved ones. The spouse and three young children of the first cousin are expected later this year.
 - The mother with little English upon arrival passed the Personal Care Attendant licensing exam in English and is now working at an area nursing home. The three children are doing well in school, speaking and reading in English.
 - Both her brother and first cousin have been working since their arrival.
- A family of five, one daughter (13) and two sons (10 and 16). Mother is pre-literate and Father is gaining some English. Three children are all doing well in school with relatively fluent English. Father works at C&S and won an award for commitment and hard work. They have a car and are saving for a house.
- Family of four with only the father knowing fair English. During the 18 months in Brattleboro, the mother worked hard to learn our language, earned her driver's license, and the ability to navigate on her own. Their daughter's language skills skyrocketed during these months, and they loved going to school where they excelled. In September 2023 they immigrated to New Zealand to join family. He wrote: *I am writing this email to say a big THANK YOU to the Episcopal Church of Brattleboro for helping our family resettle in Vermont on February 15, 2021. Saying thank you doesn't quite feel enough when trying to express my deep gratitude to everyone on the beloved co-sponsor team that I now call family.*

- This team also supported a single mother and young daughter. After several intense months of amazing teamwork and help from several other community members, the two are adjusting to life in Burlington, VT.
- A family of four (ages 5 and 18 months, born in the USA). All are learning English. Daughter is enrolled in Horizon Early Learning Program at St. Michael's. Father continuously employed full time since arrival and striving to get ahead by taking courses for a CDL license and working part-time jobs.
- Parents with ten children still in Afghanistan. Both are employed with driver's licenses and making great strides in learning English while remaining hopeful about welcoming their children to Vermont.

In addition, Jeff Lewis and Jean Smith, Co-leaders, formed The Way Forward Advisory Committee which executed a major planning effort to build a sustainable St. Michael's Refugee Ministry to address the needs of refugees and asylum seekers settling in Southern Vermont.

Our planning effort:

- Captured learnings from our challenging first year of co-sponsoring refugees,
- Sought guidance from constituencies within St. Michael's and the community,
- Evaluated a new federal government program—Welcome Corps—for co-sponsoring, and
- Assessed our relationship with the resettlement agency ECDC (Ethiopian Community Development Council), with whom we co-sponsored the five families in 2022.

Based on the assessment, the Advisory Committee decided to continue to work with ECDC, but only under a new agreement identifying additional responsibilities for each and improving the communication.

Going forward, St. Michael's will co-sponsor two families a year and support them beyond the nine months that is required, if needed, as we have seen with some of our current families. We will also be advocates of co-sponsorship in the community since St. Michael's Episcopal Church stands alone as the only organization in Brattleboro still co-sponsoring refugees.

In December, two teams of experienced volunteers were formed and will be matched in early 2024 by ECDC to families who have needs that require a higher level of support provided by co-sponsorship teams while having less federal and state financial support than Afghans arriving in 2021.

In closing, this clip in the letter from the family now in New Zealand, illustrates the benefit of this outreach: *Thank you for including us in your family and community events as we quickly felt part of your wonderful society.*

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

The committee had a busy and productive year, completing a variety of projects around the property.

THE CHURCH

The Roofs: It is with great relief that we can finally say all the roof projects are complete! Insulation has been installed and we are enjoying the benefits of greatly reduced heat loss from our buildings. Thanks to Phoenix Roofing and Farnum Insulators for their great work and attention to detail.

The Heat Pumps and Solar Panels: The heat pumps were installed this past summer in the church and rectory, and they are doing a great job with our cooling and heating needs. Because the heat pumps use electricity instead of petroleum-based fuels, our electrical usage has gone up considerably. It will be a year or so before we know the cost savings of these new systems as the annual fuel oil bill for heating will go down and the solar panels will offset our electrical usage. Stay tuned for a breakdown on these cost changes as we gather data over time. Mary has reported that the Rectory has used no fuel oil for heat since the heat pump system was installed. Norwich Solar is putting the final touches on the solar system and it should be online by the time the annual meeting rolls around. Thanks to Norwich Solar and ARC Mechanical for completing this portion of our project.

Other Projects: The temporary playground on the Rectory lawn was deconstructed this summer as the roofers completed their work on the Bradley Wing. All the new trim associated with the roof work and several new doors were painted this fall. A new deck was constructed on the north side of the church for access to the solar electrical systems. This was a requirement for the State electrical inspectors prior to energizing the solar panels.

THE GROUNDS

Gardens: Once again a dedicated group of gardeners led by Judy Davidson did an amazing job on the flower gardens and shrubs to make the church grounds look beautiful all summer and fall. Thank you, Judy!

Clean Up: Spring and fall cleanup days went off without a hitch this year, and thanks to many hands, the load was light. It really does make a huge difference when a crowd shows up for these events. We are usually done in a couple of hours. Don't be shy! There is something for all ages and abilities at these work days.

Our Sexton: I just wanted to say a big Thank You to John Laamanen for all of his hard work on the grounds this year. Your day-to-day care of the grounds, John, makes our clean up days a breeze! Also, a big thank you for your help deconstructing the temporary playground.

Submitted by *Alan McBean with members Judy Davidson, Bruce Lawrence, Greg Allen, Jonathan Davis, Ross Kinney, Steven Meyer, Vince Johnson and Craig Hammond.*

BUILDING HOPE FOR THE EARTH

“The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (Corinthians 9:6)

We never know how a seed we plant will grow, but that should never stop us from planting seeds. A seed planted as a dream way back in 2008, when church members began expressing interest in addressing the climate crisis and living our stewardship commitments through tangible actions, began to germinate with vigor in the fall of 2021.

When Mary approached a small group of people in mid-October 2021 to form a team that would explore the potential of solar power for the church, none of us could imagine that the seed would blossom into a whole church energy transformation and a strong commitment to “pursue an end to our reliance on fossil fuels and a transition to 110% clean, renewable energy by 2030, tithing 10% of our energy back to the community.” Nor could we imagine the generosity of the parish in supporting with time and talent such an audacious vision.

Both things we could not imagine came to fruition with the help of all of you!! We have successfully completed Phase 1 of the Building Hope for the Earth project and are poised to begin Phase 2 later this year. The Building Hope for the Earth Team extends our abundant thanks to all of you for your enthusiastic support!

We decided to name the project “Building Hope for the Earth” because hope is so desperately needed by so many during this global time of upheaval, social and environmental injustice, and the climate crisis. Earth’s cries grow louder every day as evidenced with even a cursory glance at the headlines or an attentiveness to what is happening in our own communities. The cries are many. Those who hear are few. Those who hear and then decide to sow seeds of hope are fewer still.

Climate prophet and Vermonter Bill McKibben says that it is “high time for the human heart to do its job” in responding to these crises. We did that at St. Michael’s, not only through the tangible actions of adding insulation, changing to more energy efficient light fixtures, transitioning our oil heat to electric minisplits, and adding solar panels to the roof of the church and rectory, but we engaged our hearts through prayer, meditative learning about the issues, Gospel teachings, and liturgy. The project was a spiritual, as well as material, transformation.

Completion of Phase 1 gets us a long way toward achieving our vision and goal, but there is more to go. After one full year of using the minisplits, we will have a clear idea of how much additional solar energy we need to generate to achieve 110%. We also gathered ideas for next steps at the October 29, 2023, all-church celebration of the project. Each idea presented is another seed of possibility for the church, from creating pollinator gardens to tangible ways to better support and engage our broader community.

Following nature’s wisdom, the Building Hope for the Earth Team will gather energy through stillness, like the seeds in the ground, for the remainder of the winter. We look forward to re-engaging with the church community come late spring to see what is emerging and to roll up our sleeves to build more hope for the earth and our community. For now, we invite all of you to gaze outwardly upon the solar panels and inwardly to your own heart to listen to the quiet voices of earth, our ancestors, and the generations to come whispering, “thank you.”

Cary Gaunt

STEWARDSHIP

The Annual Stewardship Campaign for 2024 was called ‘Witness’ We chose to reflect the importance of our ministry as an outward witness to God’s love in Christ.

We had three wonderful stewardship speakers share reflections about why they support St. Michael’s: Sam Leitermann-Long, John Lent and Robin Manning.

Because of the deepening mission of our parish and our need for part-time clergy support, the Vestry made the decision to continue to support the assistant priest position (now held by adwoa Wilson) for the next three years. This part-time priest position had been supported mostly by grants in 2023, so we hoped to raise more funds through stewardship so that the part-time position could be supported by pledges.

While we did not achieve our total goal, we did increase the total dollar amount pledged AND 50% of our pledgers increased their pledges. We are also aware that many people in our parish are still fulfilling their pledges to the Building Hope for the Earth Campaign. Still, we hope to continue to increase our total pledges over the next couple of years so that we can fully support the assistant priest position through pledges. For 2024, we will rely on funds St. Michael's received for Covid relief to fill the gap in funding the assistant priest position.

Thank you, St. Michael's, for your amazing generosity and support of our common ministry!

Year	Total pledged	Number of pledges	Number of new pledges
2011	\$198,837	119	12
2012	\$211, 693	128	11
2013	\$218,293	129	12
2014	\$217, 293	128	12
2015	\$215,878	123	9
2016	\$234, 724	128	9
2017	\$262, 282	133	11
2018	\$255,947	141	13
2019	\$268,498	140	15
2020	\$261,155	142	11
2021	\$274,155	130	8
2022	\$290,651	136	9
2023	\$281,249	140	18
2024	\$287,986	132	13

TECHNOLOGY MINISTRY

The Church in the Cloud continues into its third year! We have a faithful core of people who show up every week in the Cloud, as well as many folks who listen to the recording of the service if they happen to miss the livestreamed service at 10:15. On a recent Sunday when we had a snow storm, many of our regular attenders attended in the cloud. Although we cannot see who is attending the services, we can count “unique devices” and we average around 30-35 “unique devices per week.

Many thanks to Tian Ragle, who served as one of our camera people for over a year, but resigned the position because he went to college. Ori Johnson has taken Tian's place and we still have the help of Galen Robinson, who has been with us since the beginning of our digital ministry.

Reports from Administration & Finance

VESTRY

We began the Vestry's new year with a retreat at Hallelujah Farm in February when we reaped the essential benefits of being together in person. That February day when we welcomed new Vestry members Paul Gallagher, Cary Gaunt, and Susan Heimer was full of productivity, fruitful introspection, and renewed commitment to our mission.

This was a busy year and a good one. Meeting monthly as a whole and working on various committees and initiatives in between, Vestry members exercised oversight and action on the regular business of the parish, as well as on work that enriches community and manifests mission:

- The Building Hope for the Earth project, initiated in 2022, is nearing successful completion (see report on pages 28-29).
- The refugee ministry, also launched in 2022, has endured with compassion, fortitude and strong leadership (see report on pages 26-27).
- The 2022 Becoming Beloved Community initiative yielded heightened awareness and stronger bonds. Moreover, as we wrestled with what to do with the portrait of Bishop Henry Hopkins that had hung so prominently in the Common Room, we ended up immersed in an entire renovation of that space. Thanks to parishioner Chris Triebert's design expertise and ample volunteer hours, with a comprehensive history researched and written by parishioner Kim Peavey, and with the skills and hours donated by Alan McBean and the Buildings and Grounds team, we now welcome visitors into a bright, upbeat space in which they can sit to relax, meet with others, sign up for volunteer work, and read about our forward vision, lively present, and rich but complicated past in which Bishop Hopkins was a player.
- The Vestry voted to support the Rev. adwoa Wilson in a one-third time assistant priest position for three years. We benefit from adwoa's sermons, from her role as celebrant presiding over regular and special services such as baptisms, from her staff support, and from her community presence and outreach.
- With a focus on building and revitalizing our church community, we resurrected foyer groups this year with several groups of six to ten parishioners meeting regularly to share food, conversation, and good company. Any parishioners who wish they'd joined in are welcome to form their open groups and/or join in when the next groups form in the fall. In addition, name tags were brought back for folks to wear at coffee hour, if they wish. Any parishioners who don't yet have but would like one should see a vestry member at coffee hour. Also aimed at community building, once a month two Vestry members host a Vestry listening corner at coffee hour where parishioners can ask questions and share concerns about parish life and activities.

- We supported the Music Director Search Committee in its search and in St. Michael's ultimate hiring of Keane Southard who, with his wife Diane and son Theron, joined us in August.
- In 2023, sparked by a request to install a portable toilet on the Putney Road side lawn for the benefit of the homeless in our midst, we began to take a good look at homelessness in our town and what St. Michael's should and can do to ameliorate what has become a dire need. We have amped up our commitment to support the Loaves and Fishes meal ministry while several parishioners have begun leading their own initiatives. This is work-in-progress; parishioners interested in becoming involved should contact our rector, Mary Lindquist.

Thanks are offered here not only to our incoming Vestry members, but also to our outgoing members, Alan McBean and Steven Guerriero, and to those who carry on: Chris Hart, David Treadwell, Rosie Wojcik, Paul Gallagher, Cary Gaunt, and Susan Heimer. We also give thanks for the ongoing work of our clerk Carol Beninati and for the work of our treasurer, Tom Cain, and of Gwen Mousin, who assists.

Special thanks go, too, to all our church staff: you are invaluable—essential to our everyday work, well-being, and growth: Jeanie Crosby, Church Administrator; Rev. adwoa Wilson; John Laamanen, Sexton; and Darlene Rutnik, Bookkeeper. To our priest associates, the Reverends Jean Smith and Phillip Wilson: we are ever grateful. And to our Rector, Mary Lindquist, long may we benefit and grow with your spiritual guidance, steady leadership, and support of our lay ministries.

As I end my tenure as your Senior Warden, I remain grateful to be part of this blessed community of faith and action.

Annie Landenberger, Sr. Warden

TREASURER

St. Michael's ended 2023 financially on a positive note. Income for the year substantially exceeded our budgeted expenses. Any organization with income and expenses the size of St Michael's typically would anticipate having large, unexpected expenses in the course of the budget year. In 2023, those that we did have were easily manageable, and our expenses were actually under budget by over \$3,300. As well, because of the generosity of the St Michael's community, our operating income--primarily our plate and pledge income--exceeded our budget expectations by more than \$33,500. Other important points to note for 2023:

- Beginning last summer, we began to anticipate budgeting for the position of a permanent assistant priest. We have been greatly blessed these past years with adwoa's presence at St Michael's. It has been clear for some time that St Michael's needed to make this permanent, and we have built this into our 2024 budget.
- The roof/solar project has been substantially completed within our budgeted expectations. While it is too soon to know the full impact of this project on our utility expenses for the coming year, we expect to see a significant reduction in our overall energy costs, and especially the size of our carbon footprint.
- St Michael's has engaged the services of additional bookkeeping staff to assist our bookkeeper in maintaining our books. In an organization of our size, a backup for this

function is very important. We anticipate that this will allow us to greatly improve our financial reporting.

I will be stepping down as Treasurer for 2024 and Gwen Mousin will be assuming this role. I want to thank Mary and the Vestry for the opportunity to serve the St Michael's community as Treasurer this past year. *Tom Cain*, Treasurer

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

The year 2023 has been a generally good year for our invested funds. The year began with a balance of \$1,455,773 and ended with a balance of \$1,633,123, a gain of 12%. This follows the stock markets, which have been a bit of a mixed bag during 2023. The Endowment Committee met 4 times during the past year to discuss the status of the Fund. No concerns were found that needed addressing during the year.

I want to thank the Endowment Committee for their support and time spent at committee meetings, Jared Rediske for being the notetaker, and especially Steve Hamlin, Trust Officer for Greenfield Savings Bank, for his time and effort in setting up our Zoom meetings and reports on the status of our Funds.

Jeanette Landin, Chair; Committee: *Steve Harrison, Jared Rediske, Bruce Lawrence, Mary Lindquist, Steven Meyer, Annie Landenberger, and Susan Wilmott.*

COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY

The Communications Team—Rosie Wojcik, Mary Lindquist, Jeanie Crosby and I – aim to get the word out --within the community and beyond--about the good works in which St. Michael's is engaged. Rosie has been great at keeping St. Michael's visible in social media--she knows the platforms and uses them well; Jeanie continues to send services listings and event information to the press; and I've been writing press releases and feature articles for area print media when opportunities arise on people, events, and initiatives at St. Michael's that would be of interest to a wider readership.

We meet monthly *via* zoom to share ideas and hear updates from Mary on projects, plans, and initiatives; we then assess whether getting the word out is called for and, if so, to whom and how.

There are so many interesting people among us and projects to write about at St. Michael's, but we can only cover the basics at this point. That said, if you'd like to join us as a writer, we'll use your talents well. Just contact *Annie Landenberger* if this interests you.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

We are pleased to announce this year's Vestry candidates for election for three 3-year terms: Margery McCrum, Chris Meyer and John Spooner. The candidates who are nominated to be elected as delegates for the Diocesan Convention are David Treadwell and Steve Guerriero. An alternate delegate will also be elected at the Annual Meeting. The Senior Warden will also attend as a delegate.

Class of 2024: *Steve Guerriero, Annie Landenberger, Alan McBean*

Class of 2025: *Chris Hart, David Treadwell, Rosie Wojcik*

Class of 2026: *Margery McCrum, Chris Meyer, John Spooner*