



ST. MICHAEL'S  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



# The Annual Report for 2025

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 25, 2026



## PARISH STAFF

The Reverend Mary D. Lindquist, *Rector*

The Reverend adwoa Wilson, *Assistant Priest*

The Reverend Lars Hunter, *Deacon*

Susie Webster-Toleno, *Parish Administrator*

Keane Southard, *Director of Music*

John Laamanen, *Sexton*

Casey Parris, *Financial Administrator*

## WARDENS & VESTRY

Susan Heimer, *Senior Warden, class of 2026*,

John Spooner, *Junior Warden, class of 2027*

Belle Coles, *class of 2028*

Paul Gallagher, *class of 2026*

Cary Gaunt, *class of 2026*

Margery McCrum, *class of 2027*

Chris Meyer, *class of 2027*

Alex O'Pray, *class of 2028*

Carol Benninati, *Clerk*

Gwen Mousin, *Treasurer*

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025

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# ST. MICHAEL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH

**Sunday, January 25, 2026**

### **AGENDA**

Call to Order

Annual Meeting Slide Show

Opening Prayer

Verification of Quorum

Appointment of Clerk of the Meeting

Minutes of the 2025 Annual Meeting

Reports Received by Title

Report from Rector and Acknowledgements

Report from Assistant Priest

Report from St. Michael's Refugee Ministry

Report on Responding in Faith

Report from the Senior Warden

Report from Treasurer

Report of the Nominating Committee

Candidates for Vestry & for Delegates to Diocesan Convention

Adjournment

**Annual Meeting Minutes**  
 St. Michael's Episcopal Church  
 16 Bradley Ave., Brattleboro VT 05301

**February 9, 2025**  
 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
 Via Zoom Videoconference and recorded

**Call to Order**

The Rev. Mary Lindquist called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

**Annual Meeting Slide Show**

**Opening Prayer** from The Rev. Mary Lindquist.

**Special Zoom Videoconferencing Orientation**

Due to a snowstorm, the annual meeting was held via videoconference. Matthew Wojcik provided a Zoom “how to” orientation.

**Verification of Quorum** Through polling, it was determined that there was a quorum, with at least 52 voting members attending. A quorum would be 45. (Other family members, visitors and friends also attended.)

**Appointment of Clerk of the Meeting**

The attendees voted to appoint Carol Beninati Clerk of the Meeting.

**MOVED: Mary Lindquist      SECONDED: Paul Gallagher      (MOTION PASSED)**

Minutes of the January 28, 2024 Annual Meeting were approved without change.

**MOVED: Annie Landenberger      SECONDED: Judy McGee      (MOTION PASSED)**

Reports were Received by Title as they appear in the Annual Report.

**MOVED: Paul Gallagher      SECONDED: Christine Hart      (MOTION PASSED)**

**Report from Rector and Acknowledgements**

The Rev. Mary Lindquist thanked:

- Outgoing Vestry member Christine Hart for her service, particularly as Senior Warden.
- Outgoing Vestry member David Treadwell.
- Outgoing Vestry member Rosie Wojcik.
- Susan Heimer who was Junior Warden for the past year and is Senior Warden for 2025.
- Staff members:
  - John Laamanen, sexton
  - Philip Wilson, priest associate
  - Keane Southard, music director

- Lars Hunter, deacon
- Jeanie Crosby, recently retired church administrator. Mary also noted how well-established our new church administrator, Susie Webster-Toleno, already is.
- The Rev. Jean Smith, whom we miss since she retired and moved away a year ago.
- Casey Parris, our new bookkeeper, and her assistant Deb Bunker.
- The Rev. adwoa Wilson, assistant priest
- Parishioners Paul Gallagher and Elizabeth Fisher for their work on the Refugee Ministry
- Jeff Lewis who facilitates three Aging Groups.
- John Spooner for his vestry service but also for organizing and mentoring the counters.
- Teresa Savel, Maida McKenna, and Susan Heimer for their ministry to unhoused people, particularly through developing Skyberry, a house of hospitality.
- Cary Gaunt for the Building Hope for the Earth efforts.
- Gwen Mousin for taking on the treasurer role and the transition to Realm software.
- The Outreach Committee (numerous names) who have worked together for many years, including mission trips and stewarding money we give away to outreach organizations.

Mary says the 20 new pledges we received for 2025 are an indication that people are inspired by our parish's work.

### **Report from Assistant Priest**

The Rev. adwoa Wilson, Assistant Priest, commented on what this January has been like while Mary was on Sabbatical. She mentioned the “beautiful complications” that helped her and others see how much Mary does. Adwoa reminded us of the thanks we should give to Mary.

Adwoa encouraged us to resist the urge to be toppled by fear and overwhelmed by the many urgent things vying for our attention. She noted that many parishes are feeling this anxiety. She encouraged us to think on things that are “worthy, lovely, worthy of commendation” in the words of St. Paul.

### **Report from St. Michael's Refugee Ministry**

Paul Gallagher called our attention to the Refugee Ministry's written report in the Annual Report and highlighted a few items.

The ministry co-sponsored two families in 2024.

Through “Welcome Corps on Campus”, the State Department, Shapiro Foundation, and the School for International Training, the ministry helped receive and support 85 students who arrived in Brattleboro from refugee camps in Kenya and Jordan. These students, who were among 3,000 applying for Welcome Corps scholarships, will be preparing to go to American colleges. The Refugee Ministry recruited sponsors in 48 hours. There are 9 teams. Paul thanked parishioners for donating clothing, supporting the students' arrival, etc. Since January 24, all Welcome Corps efforts have been suspended due to U.S. Government funds being cut off.

Elizabeth Fisher reported that the Refugee Ministry is now co-sponsoring a Congolese refugee family with the West Brattleboro Congregational Church. Elizabeth asked for more refugee ministry volunteers from our parish and encouraged them to contact her or Paul.

Mary also thanked Robin Manning who worked hard last year with the Refugee Ministry.

### **Report on Building Hope for the Earth**

Cary Gaunt began with a short poem about light from Steve Garness-Holmes. It encourages us to become light, take courage, stay connected, and practice love.

Cary referred attendees to the Building Hope reports in last year's and this year's annual meeting reports and thanked everyone who participated or contributed in other ways. She highlighted the noticeably better fuel efficiency and warmer building this winter. She also thanked John Davis for providing statistics on three-quarters of the year of electrical use and heating oil. We've saved on electricity and barely used any heating oil. We generated 62.5% of energy via solar over that time.

Work should begin in the end of this month or in March to install minisplits for both heating and cooling in the sanctuary and the undercroft. Consideration was given to aesthetics regarding the historic nature of the church.

This year, we'll have greater ability to collect a full year of energy use data. The ultimate goal is to generate 110% of our energy needs without fossil fuel.

Cary encouraged parishioners to join the efforts of Episcopal Path for Creation Justice which has created a framework of prayer, learning, action, and advocacy.

### **Report on Skyberry House**

Teresa Savel spoke on behalf of the Skyberry House team, the members of which she named. Skyberry is a house of hospitality/interim shelter for unhoused children and families. It's inspired by Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker Movement.

Dorothy Day's granddaughter came to Skyberry's first "Food and Thought" hospitality event.

In 2024 the Skyberry team purchased a house, received nonprofit status, made repairs, moved in furniture, and began serving meals and providing hospitality.

More volunteer hosts are needed to live both in and out of Skyberry providing cooking, cleaning, and hospitality.

### **Interfaith Action**

In the uncertain and changing political and economic environment, some people have been exploring how to respond in our community and beyond. Jeff Lewis and Judy Davidson held one meeting and are holding another on February 23<sup>rd</sup> after church to explore this topic.

### **Report from the Senior Warden**

Senior Warden Christine (Chris) Hart encouraged all parishioners to read the Annual Report fully. She noted that it reflects the magnitude of all this parish does as followers of Christ. All the reports reflect an approach that includes prayer, discussion, discernment, and action. She noted that we've been building in faith, trust, and courage and that we are where we should be in the world. She thanked the parish for the opportunity to serve on the Vestry.

### **Report from the Treasurer**

Treasurer Gwen Mousin called attention to the treasurer's written report in the Annual Report and noted the following:

- Gwen assumed the treasurer's role in January 2024.
- The new bookkeeper, Casey Parris, has become a valuable member of the finance team.
- Gwen noted that income fell shorter than expected in 2024 but we have a rainy day fund that can cover it.
- We've adopted a new software system, Realm, that includes member database, pledge management and accounting modules. Gwen expects it will result in considerable time savings and better tracking. It will also allow parishioners more interaction with their own pledge status.

### **Report of the Nominating Committee**

Christine Hart announced the candidates for Vestry:

- Alex O'Pray
- Marribelle (Belle) Coles
- Gregory Lesch

**The three candidates above were elected to the Vestry.**

**MOVED: Paul Gallagher      SECONDED: Jeanette Landin      (MOTION PASSED)**

**Candidates for Delegates to Diocesan Convention were presented:**

- Talley Summerlin
- Craig Irvine
- Susan Heimer (by virtue of being Senior Warden)

**ALTERNATES:**

- Laura Andrews
- Craig Hammond

**These candidates for Diocesan Convention were elected.**

**MOVED: Judy McGee      SECONDED: Annie Landenberger      (MOTION PASSED)**

Jeanette Landin noted that the Endowment Committee needs a new member. Please reach out to her if you're interested.

**Adjournment: After a closing prayer from Mary, the Annual Meeting was adjourned at 1:34**

**MOVED: Paul Gallagher      SECONDED: Dorrie Degutis      (MOTION PASSED)**

## Rector's Report

*From his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace. John 1:15*



I was away from St. Michael's for four months this last year, as 2025 was a sabbatical year for me after serving at St. Michael's for 14 years! It is hard to believe it has been that long, but when I see how my children have grown from young children to mostly college students, the time seems significant. Since my last sabbatical in 2018, we have lived through a global pandemic together, experienced a successful capital campaign and building project, undergone many staff changes, and engaged in a significant ministry with refugees, just to name a few. No wonder I was very tired when I left Brattleboro on January 3, 2025. Thankfully, when I returned from the second part of my sabbatical in August, I felt refreshed, rested and ready to engage this ministry we share in Christ's name.

I am very thankful for the support and love I felt from the congregation for my sabbatical. Many things needed to be covered in my absence, and I really appreciate how many people did extra work to support our ministries during this time. Thank you to **the Vestry**, with the excellent leadership of our wardens **Susan Heimer and John Spooner**, who worked with adwoa and Thad and helped lead the congregation in my absence. Thank you to **adwoa** who covered for me in January as the priest in charge during a time of many pastoral demands. Thank you to **Thad**, an old friend of St. Michael's and mine, who brought his unique energy and wisdom to our church during the spring and summer. Thank you to **Lars** who assisted in the pastoral care ministry and was a steady, supportive presence in our Sunday liturgies. Thank you to **Susie**, who began working as St. Michael's Parish Administrator when I was on sabbatical and managed to seamlessly integrate herself into our common life and work. Thank you to **Keane**, who continued to lead St. Michael's music ministry with great skill. Thank you to **John**, our sexton, who kept our building clean and in great shape. I had no anxiety about stepping away from my position because I have so much trust in both the lay leadership of St. Michael's and in St. Michael's staff.

While I was away, I thought a lot about work and my own role at St. Michael's. As much as I loved having free time when I was away, I realized how important it is for me to be engaged in meaningful, deep, faith-centered work. I also discovered that one of the ways I felt called to shift my work at St. Michael was to spend more time exercising my priestly vocation in leading worship, performing the sacraments, teaching the basics of the Christian faith, and leading small groups, etc.) and to spend less time working on administration in organizing committees, preparing communications, or overseeing finances. This shift was motivated not only by an inner sense of call, but also by necessity: in 2025 adwoa cut back her hours at St. Michael's and Philip Wilson moved to Burlington. I am currently the main priestly presence at St. Michael's.

I'm pleased to report on some of these shifts taking place at St. Michael's.

## CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATION

**Finance** - I am so thankful to **Gwen Mousin**, St. Michael's Treasurer, and **Casey Parris**, St. Michael's Bookkeeper, who accomplished moving our finances out of QuickBooks and into a new church database called Realm. This shift entailed a great deal of training, work and attention to detail. I'm happy to report that Realm is making our financial reports, counting and stewardship much more streamlined, clear and easy to understand. It is a great relief and allows many of us to spend our time and energy on other important tasks. In 2026, we hope to orient the whole congregation to Realm, as it is not only a financial program, but is a database you can use to check your pledges, look up contact information and learn about current ministry programs.

**Communication** – A few years ago, we created a Communications Team, led by **Annie Landenberger**. I'm not sure how we ever functioned without this committee! Every month, we meet to think about communication – how do we best communicate God's love and grace to our community? How do we communicate what is happening at St. Michael's and invite others to be a part of these offerings? In our rapidly changing world, how might we communicate better? One of the fruits of this committee's work has been a re-vamping of St. Michael's newsletter, *The Guardian*. In the past, the Parish Administrator and I spent many hours each month putting the newsletter together and much of the content, repeated in our eNews and bulletins, had begun to feel redundant. We decided to change *The Guardian* to a bi-monthly publication that focused not so much on events, but on personal reflections and stories from our community. Going forward, the hope is that *The Guardian* will help us to share our faith and get to know one another better. And in the process of changing the format, five creative individuals from our church stepped forward to help with the editing process! This change has taken a lot of administration off my plate and Susie's plate. I am so thankful for the tremendous gifts of our Newsletter Team: **Erin Pesut, Annie Landenberger, Megan Buchanan, Kim Peavey and Jeanie Crosby**.

**Schedules and Website** – **Susie Webster-Toleno** has taken on many administrative duties that previously fell to me. She puts together the liturgical rota (the schedule of readers, ushers, etc.) for each week, helps update St. Michael's website, and writes many of our announcements. **Rosie Wojcik** has also helped by becoming the person who uploads the Vimeo Livestreams for the Church in the Cloud!

## CHANGES IN PRIESTLY MINISTRY

**The Catechumenate** – A couple of years ago, I noticed that more adults were seeking to be baptized at St. Michael's. This change makes sense as our wider community is no longer culturally Christian. As people now don't necessarily go to church or baptize their children, more adults are coming to church without having been baptized as children. In the fall of 2025, I decided to offer a nine-month Catechumenate class for adults and older teens who were seeking baptism and to open this class to those who would like to be confirmed or to renew their baptismal vows. We currently

have four adults and two teens preparing to be baptized at the Easter Vigil in April, three who will be confirmed, and one who will renew her baptismal vows! It has been a wonderfully rich class, meeting twice a month and reflecting on the basics of the Christian faith through study of scripture, prayer and spiritual practice.

**Liturgy Training & Worship** – One of the surprises on sabbatical is that my month spent at a Zen Buddhist Monastery gave me a greater appreciation of the importance and power of liturgy, ritual, and “the beauty of holiness.” When I returned in February, I held many liturgical trainings for the folks who help lead our worship together. My hope is that the more our liturgies can reflect the presence of God in our midst, the more unity we will experience with God and with one another in worship. In addition, I am working with adwoa to observe more of the feast days of our liturgical year, as well as to offer more opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist, to take part in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to lean into the wisdom, beauty and mystery of our Anglican heritage.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

I am hoping that we at St. Michael’s might do some vision work in 2026. This work does not necessarily mean we would change our ministry together, but that we would take a step back and look at how the Spirit is moving in our church. Where is the Spirit moving right now? How is God calling us to engage in ministry in this moment? It has been at least six years (before the pandemic) since we did any focused work on vision, and it feels like a good time to take stock and discern God’s call to us. I will be working with the Vestry to think about how to structure this process – stay tuned!

Thank you St. Michael’s for the privilege of being your rector for fourteen years. In these years, I have witnessed your tremendous faithfulness and power of God’s presence over and over in our ministries together. It has been and continues to be grace upon grace.

Yours in Christ,

*Mary*

## SPECIAL APPRECIATIONS

Below are a few special appreciations for 2025:

Thank you to **Judy Davidson** and **Jeff Lewis** who, in the wake of a new national administration, called together parishioners to share their concerns, plan concrete acts of resistance and communicate information about what was happening in our wider community. They called these gatherings, "Responding in Faith." I am so grateful to Judy and Jeff for their initiative, generosity and dedication. Out of this gathering, **Jeff Lewis**, **David Treadwell** and **Matt Miller** crafted a resolution for Vermont's Diocesan Convention that passed and was very well received, "Resist Rising Christian Nationalism." In addition, Judy Davidson organized an important gathering at St.

Michael's, "What to do if ICE comes to your church" with a lawyer from the ACLU, from which many faith communities benefited. Thank you all for your hard work, love for our community and passion for justice and mercy.

Thank you to our out-going Vestry Members, Susan Heimer, Paul Gallagher and Cary Gaunt.

**Susan Heimer** has been a member of the Vestry, Jr. Warden and Sr. Warden during her time on the Vestry. Her generosity, sense of deep care for our parish and loving spirit have made her an extraordinary person to work with – she has been a gift to me and to our church!

**Paul Gallagher** started out coming to St. Michael's occasionally during the ski season, but has grown to be one of the strongest leaders of our church! Paul has been an important Vestry member, especially in the areas of finance and the overseeing of St. Michael's audit. He wins the title, "first to move" on almost any resolution! In addition to his work on the Vestry, Paul leads St. Michael's Refugee Ministry with great love and dedication and devotion.

**Cary Gaunt's** presence on the Vestry has been a gift, especially in regard to her tremendous work with the Building Hope for the Earth initiative and her wise, deep sense of mission. She has continued to work with the Hope for the Earth Team as well as offer her gifts of teaching in forums and Lenten studies.

Thanks so much Susan, Paul and Cary!

Thank you to **Vangie Holvino** for her vision for St. Michael's Elder Ministry. She organized a team of people to offer an 18 month program to support our community in the process of aging. The Elder Ministry has provided sensitive educational offerings as well as practical tools to assist us in making the aging process more intentional, proactive and anchored in our faith!

A final thank you to "those we love and see no longer." We have lost many beloved and important people to St. Michael's in 2025 who we miss terribly and who have given tremendously to St. Michael's. Thank you to **Betty Elwell, Ken White, Greg Lesch, Shirley Hogdon, Katra Faust, Philip Stimmel, John Carnahan, Ed McCatty, David Hayden and Thomas Ely**, all members of "that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one."

## WORSHIP

- Holy Eucharist was celebrated on 52 Sundays.
- The Wednesday weekday Eucharist met in person weekly on 40 Wednesdays.
- During 2025 we offered 49 weekly Contemplative Services Thursdays at 5:30 pm, on Zoom and in the chapel.
- We held Saturday morning Centering Prayer every Saturday of 2025.



- There were 3 baptisms in 2025 (Michael Hightower, Caleb Webb & Penelope Davenport).
- There were two Confirmations in 2025 (Michael Hightower and Caleb Webb)
- The Burial office was conducted 8 time in 2025(Betty Elwell, Greg Lesch, Shirley Hogdon, Katra Faust, Philip Stimmel, John Carnahan, Ed McCatty and Thomas Ely ).
- Morning Prayer was prayed daily on the weekdays for all of 2025.
- Pine Heights and Bradley House had monthly Eucharistic services.
- Communion was brought to parishioners in their homes 15 times.
- Communion services were held at the Southern State Correctional Facility twice a month.
- Average In-person attendance in 2025 was 123 per Sunday. Average Livestream attendance was 27 unique devices per Sunday.

## ASSISTANT PRIEST



2025 began for your assistant priest with a bang, as our rector took the first part of her sabbatical. Sneaky, sneaky: she perfectly timed it with Jeanie's retirement, Susie's onboarding (and COVID), and the transition of our parish system to a brand-new database. Thanks, Mary! It was, indeed, a whirlwind first foray into a prolonged experience as priest-in-charge of a congregation. A year later, I can look back with fondness and say it was truly a gift. So much of my work involves movement in and out of various spaces. It was so tender to be with this community that I love in a sustained way, staff chaos notwithstanding. (As Susie would say: no one was hurt and the Lord was still praised.)

Of course, there were also many sorrows to being priest-in-charge during that time, and indeed, to our whole corporate life in 2025. I participated in several final conversations, funerals, memorials, and interments. It has been a year of great loss, which reminds me of the tender dignity and privilege it is to be a Christian community, and to be a leader among you. Thank you all who continue to let me, Mary, and Lars be with you in the tender moments of life.

My reduction in hours was accompanied by a more intentional shift toward a missional role in the town, grounded in the ongoing visibility of the Psalms Bible Study. I am surprised to notice that I think I am the only non-Catholic clergy in town who 'advertises' herself through regularly wearing my collar. Here are some vignettes from that missional presence:

1. *Who doesn't love a little extra meat?* Well, truth in advertisement: I don't. But the new ad campaign for The Works café has made me and us somewhat famous. I receive emails and texts from friends, parishioners, colleagues, and bishops about it. If only I'd known! Yet it has been an opening to other conversations over time about both the Bible study and St. Michael's.
2. We give thanks to The Works for hosting us these two plus years, and we look forward to continuing our public witness through our heartful presence at the Coop. What a joy to see the number of St. Michael's folks who work there as well as the number of bible study folk who disperse into the aisles for their weekly shopping.

3. My continuing practice of sermon writing in Keene has also provided opportunities to witness to the love of God in Christ and through the many aspects of St. Michael's.

Finally, the most substantial part of my work has been, and will continue to be, birthing the Communities for Spiritual Vitality. Some of you have asked for a brief word about "Where in the World" your Assistant Priest is off to. This year we actualized our goal of having a St. Michael's person on the board; thank you, Craig Irvine. We also streamlined financial systems between St. Michael's and the diocese for this ministry while increasing the financial support that the Initiative provides to St. Michael's.

In terms of the ministry itself: I served about a dozen Sundays at other churches. I organized and provided facilitation at three retreats this year, reaching participants in four states. We offered spiritual practice at diocesan convention in Vermont. I attended various conferences with other leaders of adventurous ministries in the Episcopal Church, the wider church, and the larger non-profit world.

How can you be involved with this work? First, please continue to pray for me, Hannah, the board, and the ministry. It is hard work that needs more hands and hearts. We pray especially for discernment of what is ours to do and for being sustained by the joys that come with working so intimately with people.

Second, please note that our 2026 Lenten Devotional on the Sermon on the Mount is now ready for free, online, and will soon be ready in print for a donation. It is a vibrant resource in words (with reflections from over 50 writers, including the New England bishops and the Brothers of the Society of St. John the Evangelist) and images (with licensed color art from various artists.) Please look out for detailed announcements about how to engage with this resource in the Guardian and eNews.

Finally, every Saturday morning on the Green Mountain Online Abbey, our 8:00 Morning Prayer is followed by a coffee hour to discuss themes in Scripture and tradition. At the moment, I am guiding a conversation on the Collects (Sunday gathering prayers) of the church year. All are welcome for this time of learning that lasts about 30-45 minutes.

Thank you for being such a vibrant place through which to share the story of God with those around us, and for continuing to be partners in this ministry and fellows in faith.

Shalom,  
*adwoa+*

## DEACON

My ministry as deacon at St. Michael's has continued for the year 2025. I perform the liturgical duties of a deacon at the 10:15 service and at the 8 am when I'm preaching. I preached on five Sundays in 2025. My ministry also includes participating in pastoral care by attending the monthly meetings, staying in touch with several parishioners who are in need, and making visits to hospitals, homes and care facilities when needed.



My diaconal ministry in the world continues at Center for Solace as the Bereavement Program Coordinator. A bridge of care continues between St. Michael's and the Center for Solace where several clients have joined the church this past year and current members have sought out support at Center for Solace. I recently began to broaden my ministry by volunteering at the Beloved Community Church's overnight shelter once a week.

I'm also responsible for serving The Rt. Rev. Dr. Shannon MacVean-Brown when she visits other parishes in southern Vermont. There were no bishop visits to the southern part of VT this year.

I was asked to be a member of the Commission on Ministry in 2025 and will continue in this diocesan ministry for the next two years.

A transgender support group began in 2024 and has met sporadically in 2025 for support and bible study.

It's been a difficult year for loss with the death of Archdeacon Stan Baker in June; he was my mentor and friend. Then the loss of Bishop Tom Ely, our beloved parishioner, friend and mentor.

I'm grateful and honored to be serving at St Michael's and I look forward to the coming year with its challenges and joys. Thank you for your continued support in this vibrant, Christ-centered church.

In Christ,

*The Reverend Lars Hunter*



## Reports from Worship Ministries

### ALTAR GUILD

While Mary was on sabbatical, Thad Bennett filled in. Thad described our ministry simply: "The ministry of the Altar Guild is one of 'mystery'. Clergy arrive and everything needed for worship is prepared. Their ministry is quiet, unique and almost peaceful".

There are many dedicated men and women who serve on this ministry. We care for holy items in a sacred space while supporting our parish's liturgical life. Each member serves one weekend a month. We held 2 work bees, 1 before Christmas and 1 before Easter shining the brass and readying the church before these important feast days.

Members include John Byrnes, Kiersten McKenney, Judy Walker, Carol Hesselbach, Rebecca Olmstead, Sherry Stimmel, Lindsey Boss, Susan Marshall, Craig Newbert (who does behind the scenes work—ordering supplies, cleaning and shining during the week), Marie Lawrence and Vangie Holvino (who arrange our weekly flowers and beautiful arrangements for Easter and Christmas), and Caroline Hammarlund in her ministry of preparation of the Wednesday's Noon Eucharist.

A thank you goes out to Margery McCrum for her support of our ministry as the vestry liaison. Margery shows up at our work bees, listens to our concerns and even shines some brass altarware.

Have you ever noticed the sanctuary candle hanging in the corner of the church? I was in the church one day and noticed the candle, chain and weight were on the floor, having fallen from the brace that held them there unnoticed for who knows how many years. Luckily there was no damage and no injury! The weight on the chain was very heavy, so John Laamanen, our sexton, came to the rescue. He created a whole new bar from which it hangs from now. Thank you, John for all you do supporting Altar Guild.

If you think you would like to find out more of the “mystery” of Altar Guild please let me know. I would love to talk to you

*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. It is a wonderful practice and a great way to start our day. This year we lost one of our Morning Prayer leaders and faithful attenders, David Hayden. We miss him and his wonderful singing and deep presence. Thank you to prayer leaders Teresa Saval, David Hayden, Gabriel Sistare, Judith Reichsman, Nan Tierra, adwoa Wilson, 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 Karin Bleeker, who organizes the Saturday facilitators, and to the facilitators themselves who lead Saturdays and/or Thursdays: John Daly, Caroline Hammarlund, Laura Frey, Karin Bleeker, Gay Maxwell, Joanne Patalano, Mary Lindquist, Barbara Lee and Margit & Jack Lilly.

## THE CHURCH IN THE CLOUD MINISTRY

The Church in the Cloud continues into its fifth 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 a service. Although we cannot see who is attending the services, we can count “unique devices” and we average around 27 “unique devices per week. Many thanks to Ori Johnson Jonas Ackermann-Hovis and Avi Wiltermuth who have been our camera people for 2025.

## SACRAMENTAL HEALING

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

Yes, faith is the key. Faith is the essential healing ingredient for both the prayer minister and the prayer recipient to contribute to these sacred moments together with our loving and merciful God.



Whether a request for healing or thanksgiving, the prayer minister brings a commitment to carefully listen, to open into the love of Christ, and to trust the Holy Spirit to offer the words that will be most healing and supportive for the prayer recipient. Sometimes sitting or standing, holding hands or placing hands on the petitioner’s arm or shoulders, each prayer minister surrenders to being guided by the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.

Following the prayer, the petitioner is invited to be anointed with a special oil blessed by our bishop. These prayers are a gracious offering available to anyone who has a prayer request or wishes to praise and thank God for a blessing or an answered prayer.

**Every Sunday of 2025, the prayer team was available for prayer requests or thanksgiving at both the 8:00 and 10:15 Sunday services.**

- We were saddened to lose Greg Lesch, a loyal and faithful member of the prayer team in February 2025.
- On Saturday, September 13, eleven team members met for a day-long retreat at Red Oaks in East Dummerston. The retreat was designed to connect, to share, to pray, to create, to be together, to have fun, and to trust God to lead and guide our time together and the ministry of our prayer team going forward.
- In December, three, new, prayer team members began their training. That training will conclude mid-February.
- Prayer team meetings occurred every other month at 9:00am in St. Michael’s library to support and strengthen our ministry.

**Listen \* Love \* Pray**

**2025 Prayer Team Ministers were:** Barbara Evans, Bev Bakke, Carolyn Taylor-Olson, Greg Lesch, Sher Wilson, Leigh Marthe, Janet Cramer, Margit Lily, MJ Woodburn, John Daly, Tom Evans, Megan Buchanan, and Anne Black

*Prayerfully submitted: Anne Black on behalf of the healing prayer team.*

## MUSIC AT ST. MICHAEL'S

The music ministry at St. Michael's has had a full and rewarding year. In addition to our regular Sunday singing, this year the choir sang a Lenten offering of four different settings of "Ave Verum Corpus" on Palm Sunday, and continued our tradition of singing for our Advent Lessons and Carols service. For the latter, 25 singers, the most we've had in the choir since I've been at St. Michael's, brought together a very challenging set of five anthems, including one in Polish plus the premiere of a brand-new composition of mine, "Womb of Darkness" setting words by our own Rev. adwoa Wilson. We also held two day-long choir retreats at the church to rehearse and be together in community.

Last fall, we launched the "Beloved Community Youth Choir", our reincarnation of the old St. Michael's Choir School, but unfortunately after a good start the number of children participating dwindled to a very small number, and we decided to put it on hold and restart it in the new year. This May, after some rethinking and recruiting, we restarted it with 13 children at our first rehearsal. But despite having a handful of enthusiastic kids consistently attending, our numbers dwindled again to only a small few as the summer approached. Perhaps it simply wasn't the right time for this project to take hold, so we have decided to put it on hiatus and hope to revisit the idea in another year or two.

But with the ending of one idea comes the start of a new one. Over the past several months, we have been planning and rehearsing to begin offering a monthly candlelight choral compline service, in preparation of the first St. Michael's Compline service in January. We have a group of about 8 singers who have been rehearsing and learning chants and choral settings, and we are looking forward to offering this special service to the St. Michael's community soon.



I'm also happy to report that our improvements to the organ are now complete. Our organ builder and maintainer, Larry Nevin, had been slowly but consistently working on fixing and improving it over the past year, matching the volume levels of some of the organ pipes, changing pipes to make certain stops sound a bit more different from each other, fixing many minor problems like single notes that stopped working, tuning out-of-tune pipes, etc. We still have an annoying noise from the blower that makes itself known every so often, but over all the organ is sounding great and I love getting to share its sonic possibilities in worship.

I'm looking forward to another great year of music-making at St. Michael's in 2026!

*Dr. Keane Southard, Director of Music*



### 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 2025. Here's what we hope we do:

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?"

We have had a full range of forums this year, from exploration of aspects of our faith to the outreach work with refugees and everything in between.

Many people in our parish led forums this year. Thank you to: Betsy Bates, Thad Bennett, Ann Black, Janet Cramer, John Daly, Tom Ely, Lars Hunter, Cary Gaunt, Mary Lindquist Brother John Michael Longworth, Judith Reischman, Elder Ministries, Kate Dare-Williams and Ellen Davis, Kim Peavey, Lise Sparrow, Adwoa Wilson, Phillip Wilson

As we plan for future Adult Forums, please contact the committee with ideas, offerings, and recommendations. We meet the first Wednesday of the month on Zoom. We'd love to hear from you.

*Your Adult Forum Planning Committee: Annamarie Plubar, Craig Irvine, Mary Lindquist, Carolyn Taylor-Olson, Ruth Tilghman, and David Treadwell*

## AGING DISCUSSION GROUPS

The Aging Groups began as a way for people who are becoming elders to share their exploration and learnings with each other. Since January of 2024 we have formed four separate groups with about 30 total participants. Three groups have been self-managed since September 2025. The fourth group will finish its nine-meeting program in December 2025.

Groups have read out of three books: Joan Chittister's 'The Gift of Years', Wilkie and Noreen Au's 'Aging with Wisdom and Grace', and 'Literature and Aging' a collection of writing. Elsewhere you will find a report of the Elders Ministry which grew out of the Aging Groups.

*Submitted by Jeff Lewis*

## CHRISTIAN FORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

We love children and youth at St. Michael's and are glad for new children and youth who have become active participants. We are so grateful for the dedication and faithfulness of our adult volunteers who lead this ministry with passion and love!

## PAGEANT MINISTRY

This year we took a different approach to the creation of the pageant by forming Team Pageant: Miranda Smith managed angels and showed more of her directing chops than in previous years. Lydia Taggett managed the procession and galvanized youth group members who played essential roles as narrators, vocalists, and a lighting team. Belle Coles managed and created costumes. Bri Davenport coached all -- especially the angels-- in singing and joyful movement. Joslyn Haineswood managed props and coached shepherds.



In December, then, nearly three dozen youth – infant to teenagers – came together to share their own Vermont version of the Nativity story. The 4 pm Christmas eve pageant -- a team effort boosted by parents; ushers; our Rector, Mary; our Parish Administrator, Susie; and our Music Director, Keane -- was light, bright, and full of the spirit of the season.

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: in the end though, with a little help from the Holy Spirit, the hard work pays off. If you're interested in joining in, please let any Team Pageant member know.

*Annie Landenberger, producer*

## GODLY PLAY

“Alleluia, Alleluia, ALLELUIA!” You may see the younger children of St. Michael’s at this familiar Sunday dismissal. The children also perform in the annual Christmas pageant, frolic at the Parish Picnic with us, and create their very own community at our coffee hours. What you may not observe is what is going on in their Christian education.



An integral part of that education is the Godly Play curriculum and storytelling routine. The stories, told according to a Montessori approach developed by Sonya M. Stewart and Jerome W. Berryman, feature stand-up three-dimensional figures of biblical people and entire sets of many, many biblical stories or stories relating to our faith with objects in baskets or boxes. “Storytellers” match ecclesiastical imagery and language with these memorable and playable props (some created from wood by our own local Geppettos!). “Doorkeepers” help with guidance and support. The children respond to these stories when the storyteller of the day says, “I wonder,” and then asks questions to strike a child’s creative imagination, such as “What part of this story have you seen before?” and “What part of this story is about you?”

Last year, a terrific team of parents and volunteers embraced this ministry. A huge “thank you” to them, and to all who bring their children to participate. It would be fun to have more storytellers and doorkeepers. Please consider being a part of this ministry!

*-The Godly Play Team: Susan Heimer, Judith Reichman, Miranda Smith, Judy Davidson, Bri Davenport*

## UPPER EL

Upper EL (4th-6th grade) met twice a month during the school year during the service from 10:15 to 10:50. We used lessons following the lectionary texts for each week, and incorporated skits, drawings, and baking as much as possible. The class hosted coffee hour once, and is looking forward to doing it again soon. The teachers and assistant teachers this year were Rachel Fox, Richard Cogliano, Jesse Ridgway, Marie Lawrence, and Joslyn Homberg.

*Submitted by Rachel Fox*

## YOUTH GROUP

The Youth Group for the High Schoolers of St. Michael’s was led this past year by Lydia Taggart and Ricky Davidson. It was a fun year and some of the things we did were:

- Volunteered at the Windham County Humane Society Animal Shelter
- Hosted a Waffle Bar at Coffee hour to raise money to purchase and deliver food and needed items for the Animal Shelter

- Read the Passion during the Palm Sunday service in April
- Took a trip to the New England Peace Pagoda, a Buddhist stupa in Leverett, MA
- Hosted a bake sale which raised over \$350 to purchase gifts for the kids of Groundworks Shelter and personal care items for the men of the Southern Correctional Facility
- Helped with the St. Nicholas Day fair, including cookie decorating
- Performed important roles and tasks in the Christmas pageant



It was a great year of fellowship and service, and we are looking forward to more adventures together in 2026!



## REPORTS FROM MISSION AND MINISTRY

### PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

The Pastoral Care Team met monthly in 2025. Much of what we do in our meetings is to communicate about the needs of parishioners and try to reach out to people with visits, phone calls, prayer, sharing Holy Communion and connecting folks with community resources. When able, we try to coordinate meals and transportation. Many thanks to the dedicated and generous members of the Pastoral Care Team: *Betsy Bates, Judy Davidson, Lars Hunter, Jenny Karstad, Jack Lilly, Mary Lindquist, Margery McCrum, Joan Pinilla, Jane Sbardella, Ruth Tilghman.*

### ELDERS MINISTRY

The Elders Ministry officially launched its activities on September 28, 2025 by offering its first Adult Forum, *An Overview: A Map for Navigating the Journey to the End*. The purpose of the Elders Ministry is to help each other attend to our aging trying to make this stage of our lives more intentional and proactive. Our objectives are to: 1) build stronger support networks, 2) share our experience and knowledge of community resources, and 3) help us be better prepared for the various challenges of old age.

Our first-year activity has been to offer a series of Adult Forums and Workshops to educate ourselves on a way of understanding the challenges and rewards likely to be encountered as we go

through our later years of life, 65 and older. We are using as a common framework for our discussions, an adaptation from the book by Dennis McCullough, M.D., *My Mother, Your Mother: Embracing "Slow Medicine," The Compassionate Approach to Caring for Your Aging Loved Ones* (Harper Collins, 2008). This adaptation was authored by Evangelina Holvino and James Cumming, motivated by their own journey with James' Parkinson's Disease, which they named, *A Map for Navigating the Journey to the End*. To explore if the idea of an Elders Ministry was of interest to members of our congregation, we facilitated a Forum on April 27, 2025 to share the experience of the Aging Discussion groups led by Jeff Lewis and propose an Elders Ministry at St. Michael's.

A Steering Committee formed by Evangelina Holvino, Elizabeth Fisher, Jeff Lewis, Jane Sbardella, M.J. Woodburn, and Susan Marshall conceptualized the scope and potential activities for an Elders Ministry, and a proposal for the new Ministry was discussed with relevant groups and church leaders: Mary Lindquist, Lars Hunter, Pastoral Care Ministry, The Vestry, and the Adult Forum Committee. We have developed and printed a simple flier to distribute to the congregation stating the purpose of the Ministry and the list of Forums planned from September 2025-November 2026. We have recently proposed a budget to support our activities. We also intend to offer a series of Workshops, following the Forums, aimed at taking concrete steps recommended to be addressed in each stage of this journey. Our first workshop took place on December 14, 2025 after Coffee Hour and was dedicated to learning how to complete three key documents which are important to have in-hand in the phase of Stability and Looking Ahead, the 1<sup>st</sup> Gate in the Map for Navigating the Journey to the End. So far, our educational activities have been well attended (approximately 25 participants in the Forums and 15 participants in the Workshop) and there is demonstrated interest in understanding and working on the topics generated in our presentations and discussions. In addition, in each Forum and Workshop we distribute written information and identify resources that can be accessed to expand on and apply what we are learning. We are very much looking forward to continuing our work in the new year.

For access to the proposal and other materials distributed during the Forums and Workshops, please contact Vangie.

*Submitted by Evangelina (Vangie) Holvino*

## CHRIST CHURCH GUILFORD

In 2025, the Board of Directors and friends of the Christ Church Guilford Society, Inc., made considerable progress at St. Michael's beloved Mother Church in Algiers Village. While one long-time Board member stepped down, we were able to recruit another. We meet almost monthly, as does a separate Events Committee, to conduct our work.

We heard great news in mid-December: we received another \$20,000 matching grant from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation! This is to repair the plaster ceiling. Once that's done, we can reopen to the public.

With grant and other generous financial support, we did the following:

- completed structural repairs to the attic and roof framing
- completed structural and architectural repairs to the exterior walls and eaves
- power-washed and painted the main exterior walls
- replaced the roof ridge cap
- began making repairs to the Spire, windows, and related trim work
- installed an interim roof at the top of the Spire
- determined that the Spire pinnacles will have to be rebuilt following the September 2023 lightning strike

We are raising money, through grants and a major annual appeal, to install a new lightning rod system.

In order to keep Christ Church in the public eye while we remain closed, we maintain our comprehensive website and held these events in 2025:

- outdoor concert by the BUHS Jazz Band
- exhibit at St. Michael's
- outdoor concert by the Back O' Town Cajun Band

We thank everyone for your support!

Board members: Valerie Abrahamsen, Melanie Boese, Andy Burrows, Carol Leitch, Mary Lindquist, Kate McGinn, and Edmund Meade. Events Committee: Valerie Abrahamsen, Andy Burrows, Carol Leitch, and Don McLean.



*Submitted by Valerie Abrahamsen*

## GROUNDWORKS SHELTER MEALS MINISTRY

As the homeless population of Brattleboro has grown, it has become more challenging to care for all of those in need. Nevertheless, the generous parishioners of St. Michael's Episcopal Church continue to help sustain the Meals Ministry at the Groundworks Drop-In Center on South Main Street.

Our dinners—this year delivered on the first Thursday of each month from October through April—had been feeding about 35 people. This year the need has increased to over 55! Our meal often consists of a main course of a hot pasta dish, such as lasagna or macaroni and cheese. Included with this is a tossed salad, bread and butter, whole milk, and dessert. By April, we expect to have helped nourish more than 387 people.

At a time when the capacity for charitable giving is sometimes strained, we are profoundly grateful to the volunteers who make this effort happen and have sustained it over the years. There is no more direct way to help those in need than this. If you would like to know more about participating,

please contact Christopher Wesolowski at [cmwvt65@gmail.com](mailto:cmwvt65@gmail.com) or Liz Vick at [ebethvick@gmail.com](mailto:ebethvick@gmail.com).

*Respectfully submitted, Christopher and Elizabeth*

## SCHROEDER FUND COMMITTEE

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

**Education:** In 2025, the Education Fund was used to help fund two spiritual retreats for parishioners, as well as a stipend and continuing education for St. Michael's Deacon.

**Total for Education:** \$1322.13

**Outreach:** The money allotted for outreach goes to support the Help Fund. 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 may know more information about the person who is requesting, and we will know if the request is viable. Help Fund has felt the stress of the unhoused. The funds for Help Fund have decreased with St Michaels being the biggest supporter. There are many more car repair requests so people could get to work and medical appointments and requests for back utility bills. The mission of Help Fund is to keep people in their housing and to help others obtain housing.

**Total for Outreach:** \$8,804.88

## LOAVES AND FISHES

Loaves and Fishes is a joint mission of St Michael's and Centre Congregation Church and our mission is to feed anyone who is hungry and food insecure.

David Treadwell, Craig Irvine, Donald Woodford (treasurer), Belle Coles, and Ruth Tilghman serve on the Steering Committee with Centre Church committee. Michael Kennedy serves as needed for legal matters.



The need for feeding people in the whole Brattleboro area continues to implode as more people have become unhoused.

**Funding:** We were able through grants to supply our refugee market and secure fresh produce through a CSA grant. Supplies from local stores also helped. Project Feed the Thousands is a source of funding as well as Mission and Outreach from both churches. And we are always most thankful for our individual donors as well as the financial support from St Michaels, especially the Tag Sale.

Grocery stores and our CSA Wild Carrot donate food, and Loyd Graf is our organizer to pick these up, weigh and sort. Food Bank pick up on Wednesdays is organized by David and we often receive 2000 to 3000 pounds

On Tuesdays and Fridays

- over 50 volunteers are working to make Loaves and Fishes run smoothly
- prep of vegetables and sorting and repacking bulk is overseen by Cliff Wood with many hands
- music, organized by Annie Landenberger, helps to keep everyone singing while working
- 150 meals are sent to Groundworks
- 50 meals are sent to 69 A
- 40 boxed meals are delivered by Becky Anderson to Foodworks for homeless
- 40-50 bags of groceries are bagged up Teri Robinson and Pam Carr to be given away
- food is distributed in boxes to Dalem Chalet, Colonial Motel, High Rise, Hayes Court and individuals. Our delivery team of Sherl Wilson, William Sterns (leader) Craig Irvine, Tim , Chris and Brian Morgan fill up their cars and often do it in 2 trips.
- families in Hospice are delivered meals
- 200-250 meals are served out the door
- frozen and fresh food are also supplied with bags of groceries
- diapers from Mission and Outreach are always appreciated. The Food Bank also donates free women's products.
- refugee Market: (Linda Rice, Judy Davidson) With grants, donations and food from the Food Bank, we have been able to provide our Afghan families and our newer refugees food particular to their dietary requirements fresh vegetables, eggs and milk. And it serves as a safe place to meet, shop and talk.

*Ruth M Tilghman*

## PRISON MINISTRY

For more than thirty years St Michaels has conducted bi-weekly services at the Southern State Correctional Facility in Springfield, one of Vermont's six state prisons. Current service leaders are John Lent and Cliff L Wood, and music by Ron Bos Lun.

In addition to the services, the team also collects paperback books, puzzles and magazines. Over the last seven years over 5,000 paperbacks have been donated. Also because of the generosity of the Vestry and the Outreach Committee, the team is able to provide an ongoing supply of much needed toiletries. Over forty percent of the men at Southern State are indigent, which means that they have no outside financial support; St. Michael's generous support allows the men the basic dignity and comfort of being able to tend to their bodies. As we tend to their spirits through worship, we are also grateful that through a connection by the late Bishop Tom Ely, the team can also provide paperback Bibles to those who request them.

Annually, the team collects socks for holiday gift bags for the indigent. Thanks to the many good folks at Saint Michael's, your Prison Ministry team was able to deliver hundreds (yes, *hundreds!*) of pairs of socks for the gift bags for the men at Southern State this year.

*Cliff L. Wood, Liaison for Prison Ministry*

## **TAG SALE MINISTRY**

The annual St. Michael's Tag Sale for 2025 was held on Sat., May 3. In spite of predictions for heavy rain, we were once again blessed with dry weather until a half-hour before our 2 pm closing time, when the skies opened up! Outdoor packing of remaining items up was extra-speedy, with many hands helping.

The 2025 Tag Sale was a great financial success with a total income, after expenses, of \$10,500. The organizations benefitting from the sale this year were the Winston Prouty Family Fund, which received \$2,000 and Loaves and Fishes, which was granted \$8,500. Both organizations were grateful for the donations and are putting the funds to good use, helping Brattleboro area individuals and families in need take better care of their young children (Prouty Center) and get much-needed nutritional support (Loaves and Fishes).

As has become the custom in the past few years, the sale was set up in part under big tents outside the church (clothes, children's items, sporting goods, art objects, furniture and more), and partly downstairs in the Undercroft (housewares, books, jewelry, linens, and delicious homemade food.) Many items were "sold" for whatever donation customers wished to give, and other items were priced. The sale was well-attended and some types of goods- furniture and linens, for example- were mostly gone by the end of the day.

Shoppers are extra-generous when they see that the financial donations they give for sale items will go to benefit a local organization like Loaves and Fishes or the Prouty Center. We are grateful for all the people who come to shop at the sale year after year. We also really thank all the hard-working and cheerful volunteers who make the Tag Sale possible and fun, helping with all the varied jobs of putting the sale together: gathering to sort housewares, clothes and linens, hauling furniture, setting up the jewelry tables, cooking and serving food, helping shoppers, and so much more. We couldn't do this without you!! This Ministry is one in which many, many parishioners join together for the common cause of helping community organizations.

In an effort to spread out the responsibilities more equitably, the Tag Sale Ministry has been reorganizing since July, 2025. Liz Vick has stepped down as chair; Pam Gallagher is now the lead person. Ministry members have taken on leadership of their areas of specialty, and we are working as a team to keep the sale energized and successful. We are looking forward to another great Tag Sale year in 2026! The sale date will be Sat., May 2<sup>nd</sup>. We rely on the support of you, our fellow parishioners and friends, to help us maintain this successful St. Michael's event in coming years!

Respectfully submitted,

*Pam Gallagher with Becky Anderson, Betsy Bates, Susan Heimer, Charlene Kemp, Eva Kopacz, Kiersten McKenney, Lori Palmer, Joan Pinilla, Linda Rice, Jane Sbardella, Sherry Stimmel, Liz Vick and Rosie Wojcik.*

## REFUGEE MINISTRY

2025 was the fourth year of the Refugee Ministry co-sponsoring refugee families. The Ministry partners with ECDC (Ethiopian Community Development Council) which resettles all refugees assigned to southern Vermont.

Last year we concluded the Refugee Ministry Annual Report with the following “Looking ahead to 2025, operative word is “uncertainty” because it is expected that the number of refugees granted visas to enter the US may be reduced to previous levels...” Not only was the number reduced but on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, one of the first Executive Orders suspended the Refugee Admissions Program which has been the foundation of refugee resettlement since 1980. As a result, the Refugee Ministry co-sponsored just one family of high need.

However, we had been working with SIT, the Shapiro Foundation and ECDC to enable 85 refugee students, who had been admitted to US colleges for the Fall 2025 semester, to immigrate as refugees and begin a rapidly developed college prep program the week of January 13th, 2025.

We recruited team leaders and members to build nine teams who supported 8-10 students each. The experience and dedication of the teams, most of whom had been working with refugee families for three years, enabled an extremely successful experience for the students.

Since it became clear in late 2025 that drastically fewer families will be resettled in 2026-28 and all immigrants are facing an increasingly threatening environment, the Refugee Ministry is now recruiting and training volunteers to help New Vermonters with services they identified as needed, such as completion of forms and applications, conversation partners, navigation of educational and health services. Most of these will be provided in a new Multicultural Community Center which opened on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026. We have plenty of options for you to help with your special skills and interests.



## SKYBERRY HOUSE

During the passage of one year we have experienced life in many forms. And throughout this year, prayer has been a channel to deepen the relationship into which God has welcomed skyberry, a relationship that loves (and glorifies) God above all things, loves (serves and learns with) our neighbors and grows compassion for ourselves. We strive to answer the call to live and work alongside those who are unhoused, knowing well that the work is only a drop in the ocean and truly a way to gladden the heart.

skyberry continues to grow a community model of hospitality for the unhoused and housed in our community through interim housing, events at skyberry, food distribution and now through the Beloved Winter Shelter.

- We have elaborated our mission of serving families, which does not necessarily mean, ‘more than one,’ to include welcoming individuals into our house.
- We have come to experience gratefully the vital support that the refuge community has been so blessed by, and are curious why it is not as robust for our local unhoused.
- Rosanne Haggerty of Community Solutions, an organization that contributes expertise to cities and counties willing to achieve “functional zero”- defined as “a future where homelessness is rare overall, and brief where it occurs,” has a fundamental goal, both bold and hopefully positive.
- Community Solution’s objective is clear: “for each person we see in shelters and out on the streets, somebody has to own responsibility for knowing that person and getting them housed.” In skyberry’s humble way, building relationships through hospitality, is the first step we take on this long and winding road with our unhoused siblings. Is it time for Brattleboro to take up this goal in 2026? May it be so!!!
- We feel the hardships and the blessings of this work and invite others into the spiritual endeavor that is developing through skyberry House of Hospitality. Call us: 802-451-6724, email us: houseskyberry@gmail.com
- We express ongoing gratitude to our Creator, our board (Mark Weltner, Michael Kennedy, Susan Heimer, Jack Davidson, Mary McKenna), donors, volunteer friends and those who keep us in their prayers. We are a stellar team and God is GREAT!

Our year in a nutshell:

- First skyberry house meeting
- Handbook/policy work continues
- NVC work continues
- mezuzah ceremony for the house led by Rabbi Amita with friends
- House repairs continue with 2nd bathroom completed
- Biodynamic gardening practices begin at skyberry house.
- Search for a BD Ag Host to grow food for the unhoused. Offer of land to grow food by sb friend D.C.

Host conversations: (6), visits and internships begin

Host in discernment: 1 current

Resident Volunteer: 1 (former guest)

Referral engagements:

- Families- 11
- Individuals- 5

Housed within skyberry:

- Families-1(individual considering self and cats (no longer in their care) as a family unit)
- Individuals- 2

Housing (interim or permanent) secure from referrals:

- Families- 7 (Hotel, shelters, apartments)
- Still potentially unhoused (no further communication with skyberry):
- Families- 4
- Individuals- 2

Hospitality shared and continues with many of our referrals:

- rides, food, hotel stays, respite, play area for children, craft, listening and conversation, house gatherings
- Food and Thought series with community leaders at the house
- Interfacing continues with community partners- COSA, Root Social Justice Center, ECDC & Refugee Ministries, Loaves and Fishes, 69a, Community Circles with Interaction, Groundworks, ACT, CHST, LA Catholic Worker House and others
- Housing Case Management for unhoused friends begins
- End of life conversations held at skyberry for David Hayden and friends

The passing of:

- skyberry's beloved David Hayden (who was offered and accepted the first apartment through WWHT)
- Wild Bill Flemming (Brattleboro born, Vietnam Veteran, needlepoint master and skyberry collaborator)
- Anne Elizabeth (Libby) Howes

Blessed engagement into new life:

- David doula-ed into new life by and with skyberry friends and family in his apartment (living there a total of 10 days)

DFH gift supports:

- Hotel stay for family in crisis
- Foot care clinic at Beloved Winter Shelter
- New phone and food for hotel-based family

Food distribution increases

- Sundays, from beverages and seasonal popsicles to a monthly food offering; volunteers welcomed!



Beloved Shelter conversations and organization begins, grant writing, fiscal sponsorship (gratitude to Elizabeth Moriarty and all our community partners)

Thanksgiving at Harmony parking lot outdoor sharing of food, fellowship and gratitude

#### OPENNING OF BELOVED WINTER SHELTER- DEC. 1ST

- Foot care clinic begins- Elizabeth Howe is our first foot care recipient
- First birthday celebrated at Beloved Shelter

Celebrations of LIGHT at skyberry:

- Hanukah
- Solstice
- Xmas Eve

*Teresa Savel, with Susan Heimer, Maida McKenna, Jack Davidson, Michael Kennedy, (and many volunteers)*

## BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

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

### THE CHURCH

*New Heat Pumps:* Heat Pumps for the Undercroft and Sanctuary have been installed and are up and running. We are still working on the most efficient way to utilize the new system but have been making good progress. Hopefully everyone has been a little more comfortable on hot summer and cold winter Sundays.

*Septic Pump Station:* The church is hooked into the Town Sewer via a pump station located in the playground. This consists of 3 manholes for access, a large tank to receive wastewater from the church and 2 pumps that intermittently pump wastewater up the hill to Putney Road. This summer the pumps installed during the renovation in 2011 failed and were replaced with new grinder pumps. Several weeks after the installation of these new pumps they stopped working. They were pulled up, inspected and found to be clogged with disposable wipes. Please, please, please...only flush toilet paper and what has been processed by your digestive system. Any inorganic items have the potential to clog and burn out the very expensive pumps. There is a system in place to try and intercept this material but it is not perfect. There are wastebaskets in the bathrooms for other waste.

## THE GROUNDS

*Rectory:* The new plantings seem well established at this point and didn't require any watering heroics this past summer. Mary and Kurt are also the proud owner of a new Washer and Dryer.

*Gardens:* 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! Judy would love some more helping hands with the gardens so if you enjoy gardening reach out to Judy. All skill levels are welcome.

*Memorial Garden:* A generous donation from a parishioner who requests anonymity allowed us to install sturdy handrails at the steps to the Memorial Garden, allowing for greater safety for those wishing to visit that sacred space. Vince Johnson volunteered to paint the rails so that the blend in better with the surroundings than they did upon installation.

*Clean Up:* A few hardy souls showed up for a spring raking session and we never did make a date in the fall. Any leaf pickup was accomplished by our sexton John. A very big thank you for your hard work, John! 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 make our clean up days a breeze!

The Buildings and Grounds committee is always looking for people who enjoy outdoor work. Speak with any member of the committee or a Vestry member if you are interested. John Spooner is our official Vestry liaison.

Happy New Year to all!

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

## BUILDING HOPE FOR THE EARTH

In February 2022, St. Michael's Episcopal Church set an audacious goal for our small, but engaged, church:

*St. Michael's commits to its mission of stewardship of the earth by pursuing an end to our reliance on fossil fuels and a transition to 100% clean, renewable energy by 2030, tithe 10% of this energy back to our community.*

This became our Building Hope for the Earth campaign. The emphasis was clearly on improving our building envelope, transitioning our heating and cooling sources, and adding as many solar panels as possible to our church buildings. We identified four phases to the project, starting with the roof replacement that was coupled with additional energy efficiency measures such as insulation and

actions (e.g., weatherstripping) to reduce air leakage from the building. From there we updated lighting, electrified our heating and cooling systems, and added solar panels. With the installation of four wall-mounted Mitsubishi Mini-split HVAC systems in the Sanctuary this spring, St. Michael's completed Phases One through Three of the Building Hope for the Earth project. Phase Four will begin in June 2026 when we finally have enough data on energy use to determine how much additional solar energy, we will need to cover all our energy requirements, plus our tithe 10% back to the community.

With the generous support of our church family—all of you—plus grants from Vermont Interfaith Power and Light and energy efficiency incentives from Green Mountain Power and Efficiency Vermont, we are nearing the end of our ambitious energy-focused project!

Hope for the earth is more than just renewables. To live with a creation justice mindset, we really need to look at all facets of church life. This past year, a small group of parishioners joined with Rev. Mary Lindquist and our mentor from the Diocese, Rev. Rachel Field to pursue the Episcopal Path for Creation Justice (see <https://www.episcopalcreationpath.org/>) to “deepen and grow in a holistic response to the climate emergency.” After six months of reflection, prayer, analysis, and discussion, the group decided to expand and re-brand the St. Michael's Building Hope for the Earth project to the **Hope for the Earth** program. The Hope for the Earth program will launch in 2026 with five priorities:

1. Continue implementing the Building Hope for the Earth decarbonization plan to achieve the goal.
2. Create a sustainable waste management plan building on existing programs and expanding to achieve a near zero-waste approach.
3. Revise our investment portfolios for a greener future by screening out fossil fuel contributors and other polluters.
4. Design and implement a holistic approach to year-round ecospiritual formation with an emphasis on liturgy; music; contemplation; prayer; and learning.
5. Support individuals with end-of-life planning for green burials.

Look for more information in the new year. We hope you will join us as we endeavor as a church community to continue modeling our call to creation justice and environmental stewardship through action!

*Submitted by Cary Gaunt*

## STEWARDSHIP

The theme of St. Michael's 2026 Stewardship Appeal was *Countless Gifts of Love*. Every part of our church reflects God's love and abundance, from meaningful worship to life-changing ministries. These ministries are made possible through the generosity of our congregation. Each financial gift

you provide helps to extend the reach of our mission, enabling us to be a light in our community and beyond. Thank you for your support of St. Michael's!

We can all be proud of and grateful for St. Michael's parishioners' generous financial support of our church. We've exceeded our goal for number of pledges and almost met our overall goal of \$321,000 for 2026.

- Dollars pledged: \$318,144
- New pledgers: 11
- Total pledges: 145

This year, 58% of us increased our pledge amount over last year. In a time when so many churches struggle to build membership and remain financially healthy, St. Michael's is thriving.

Thanks to everyone who pledged your financial support of St. Michael's ministries and mission in the world. We are grateful!

*Respectfully submitted by the Stewardship Team: Laura Andrews, Craig Irvine, John Lent, Mary Lindquist, Margery McCrum, Alex O'Pray*

Year	Total pledged	Number of pledges	Number of new pledges
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
2025	\$311,581	147	20
2026	\$318,144	145	11

## Reports from Administration & Finance

### VESTRY

The year began with the Annual Meeting, at which time thanks were given for the services of outgoing Vestry members David Treadwell, Rosie Wojcik, and Chris Hart, and welcomes given to new members Belle Coles, Greg Lesch, and Alex O'Pray. In February, the Vestry held a retreat that prioritized imagining ministry beyond what a rector provides, with a focus on feeling empowered to make important decisions while Mary would be away on Sabbatical. Sadly, Greg passed away before he could serve. In his stead, Gabriel Sistare filled in for a portion of the year. Susan Heimer served as the Senior Warden and John Spooner as the Junior Warden for the year.

**Of particular note were the Vestry's support for the following:**

- **Mary's 2025 Sabbatical.** Lars and the Pastoral Care Team covered January, and the Rev. Thad Bennett served as Sabbatical Priest from May 13 to August 5. Thad organized a "New Episcopalians" group with excellent attendance and initiated an engaging theme of "Signposts," where parishioners shared their journeys of faith.
- **The Responding in Faith Initiative** led us to become a sanctuary church. Additionally, David Treadwell and Jeff Lewis prepared a Resolution Resisting Christian Nationalism, which St Michael's presented to the Diocesan Convention in October, where it was overwhelmingly accepted.
- **Building Hope for the Earth.** The church successfully installed the last minisplits to heat and cool the sanctuary, running off electricity generated by solar panels gifted through our "Building Hope for the Earth" capital campaign under the leadership of Cary Gaunt.
- **Personnel Changes.** The Vestry supported the Rector as she oriented new Parish Administrator Susie Webster-Toleno. We also said farewell to the Rev. Phillip Wilson, who moved to Burlington after 16 years as our Priest Associate
- **Responding to Our Neighbors.** The Refugee Ministry offered assistance to Brattleboro's refugees and a group of 80 refugee students housed at SIT for six months. The church also continued to support Skyberry House, which became the fiscal sponsor for the Winter "Beloved Community" Overflow Shelter, and Loaves and Fishes, which cooked and fed more people than in any prior year.
- **The Annual Parish Picnic** was organized and hosted in a new location, the Moorhead-Lins's home in West Chesterfield.

The Vestry's communication and involvement in our church community are integral to the many ministries reported on in this booklet as St. Michael's continues to be "A Christ Centered Community of Practice awakening to the abiding presence of God."

A Vestry motto is "Pray. Discuss. Discern. Act!" We believe the Spirit is leading us in our work. On behalf of the Vestry, I thank all of you for your contributions to our parish community.

*Submitted by Susan Heimer, Senior Warden*

## OUTREACH ALLOCATION COMMITTEE

In 2025, three members of the Vestry (Belle Coles, John Spooner and Paul Galleher) worked with Mary Lindquist to make decisions about disbursing the \$12,000 in Outreach Funds allotted to direct outreach funding in the 2025 budget. Below are the organizations that received funding from St. Michael's:

Loaves & Fishes - 1/3 Utilities	2,824.00
Loaves & Fishes - additional	1,000.00
Prison Ministry	1,321.77
St. Thomas Clinic	2,500.00
Windham County Heat Fund	1,000.00
69a - deep cleaning	300.00
Brattleboro Walk-In Clinic	1,000.00
Episcopal Relief & Development	1,027.00
Skyberry House	1,027.00
	<hr/>
	<b>11,999.77</b>

## TREASURER

As St. Michael's Treasurer, I am pleased to report on several positive activities that occurred this past year.

### Successful Implementation of Phase I of the *Realm* Church Software System

We converted to a new church software system called "Realm". The year began with a conversion of our church database and giving platform, which resulted in improved processes and reduced significantly the time spent by our Church Administrator, Bookkeeper, Counters, and Treasurer on related administrative and financial tasks. By March of 2025, we had converted to the Accounting module of Realm, which provided full integration of our membership database, pledge management and giving administration, and accounting and financial reporting modules. We were very pleased with the smooth implementation of the software and with the many enhancements and efficiencies it has provided. In 2026, parishioners will be invited to interact with the Realm system to manage their own information and giving activities with user-friendly tools.

### Positive 2025 Financial Results

While we entered 2025 concerned with an approved Operating Budget that reflected a potential deficit, I am happy to report that we ended 2025 with a positive net income. There were several factors that impacted these results:

*Total operating income of \$448,735 was higher than was originally projected.*

- 2025 Plate (non-pledge) income exceeded projections and brought in over twice what was budgeted.
- We received an increase in our Endowment draw income when a correction was made by the Endowment Committee mid-year.
- The Diocese increased the amount we received from the Lilly Grant indirect (to support our administration of that grant).

*Total operating expenses of \$434,295 were lower than originally projected:*

- Total personnel expenses were under budget due to the reduction in hours of our Assistant Priest position that occurred mid-year.
- Despite a few categories of expenses that were over budget, many other categories showed expenses less than budgeted.

With the combination of these factors, we anticipate a net positive operating income of \$14,439 as of 12/31/25.

### **Supporting our Community**

In addition to successfully meeting the operating needs of St. Michael's in 2025 within our budget, we were also able to generously support initiatives and programs in our community through funding from our operating budget, non-operating funds, and from other gifts. The following are some of the programs that received support from St. Michael's in 2025:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help Fund (SEVCA)</li> <li>• Loaves and Fishes</li> <li>• Prison Ministry</li> <li>• Beloved Winter Shelter</li> <li>• St. Thomas Community Health Center</li> <li>• Winston Prouty Center Family Fund</li> <li>• Brattleboro Walk-in Clinic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Windham County Heat Fund</li> <li>• Refugee Ministry</li> <li>• Skyberry House</li> <li>• Swords to Plowshares</li> <li>• Christ Church</li> </ul>
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### **Notes of Gratitude**

I would like to thank those that participated in and supported the financial activities of St. Michael's in 2025. To Mary and the Vestry for their support and guidance. Appreciation for Susie Webster-Toleno and Rosie Wojcik who ably and cheerfully learned and navigated Realm as we implemented it. Casey Parris, our Bookkeeper, has been an invaluable resource who capably set up and implemented the new accounting side of Realm. Thanks also to our back-up check signers, Tom Cain and Bruce Lawrence, who were always willing to fill in when needed. I would also like to acknowledge John Spooner and his team of Counters who learned and adapted to the new Realm system. And immense gratitude for our parishioners, whose generosity allows St. Michael's to do all the good work that is evident within our parish and our community.

*Gwen Mousin, Treasurer*

## OFFERING COUNTERS

St. Michael's relies on a group of dedicated volunteers to do the weekly offering counting. In past years, the count was done immediately after each service. Beginning in October 2024, Mary assembled a new offering counting team to count the offering on a weekday morning when the parish administrator was in the office. The thinking was that this would enable the counters to seek guidance when they became uncertain as to how to best record donations. This new process helped the new counting team ask questions of and be tutored by both Jeanie Crosby, our former administrator, and by Susie Webster-Toleno, our current administrator as of January 2025. Also beginning in January 2025, our Treasurer Gwen Mousin helped us move away from using two different donation and bookkeeping software programs to a church management specific software called Realm. We have found that Realm has sped up and improved the accuracy of the offering counting enormously. It also permits the Treasurer, our bookkeeper Casey, our administrator Susie, and the counter team to review the giving records and produce reports more easily. The current counting team consists of John Spooner, Dorrie Degutis, Rosie Wojcik, Bev Bakke, Janet Brocklehurst, and Sher Wilson.



*John Spooner, Junior Warden*

## ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

The year 2025 has been a generally good year for our invested funds. The year began with a balance of \$1,770,681 and ended with a balance of \$1,908,911, a gain of 7.8%. This follows the stock markets, which have been a bit of a mixed bag during 2025, with the economic upheavals felt across the multiple sectors in which the church's money is invested. The diversification of our investments has been key to our gains. The Endowment Committee met four times during the past year to discuss the status of the Fund. No significant 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 serving as the notetaker, and especially Steve Hamlin, Trust Officer at Greenfield Savings Bank, for his time and effort in setting up our Zoom meetings and for the reports on the status of our Funds. I am stepping down as the Endowment Committee Chair at this time and passing the Committee's leadership to Jared Rediske. It has been my pleasure to serve in this capacity.

*Jeanette Landin, Chair*

*Committee: Jared Rediske, Mary Lindquist, Steve Meyer, John Ogorzalek, John Spooner, Gwen Mousin, and Susan Wilmott.*

## COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY

The Communications Team—Rosie Wojcik, Mary Lindquist, Susie Webster-Toleno, Chris Meyer, and I – have been working 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; Susie 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. Erin Pesut has joined the team recently as a representative of the team that's been shaping the new Guardian and Chris has provided both art work for that and Vestry perspective and input on Communications.

We meet monthly via zoom to share ideas and hear updates from each other and, especially, 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. If you'd like to join us as a writer, we'll use your talents well. Just contact Annie Landenberger if this interests you.  
[\(verbatimvt@gmail.com\)](mailto:verbatimvt@gmail.com)

*Submitted by Annie Landenberger*



## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee are those Vestry members retiring: *Paul Gallagher, Cary Gaunt, and Susan Heimer*. We are pleased to announce this year's Vestry candidates for election for 3-year terms: Michael Hightower, Ricky Davidson, Annamarie Pluhar; and for a 2-year term, Rosie Wojcik.

The Senior Warden will attend this year's Diocesan Convention as a delegate. Other delegates and alternate delegates will be elected at the Annual Meeting.

***Class of 2026:*** *Paul Gallagher, Cary Gaunt, Susan Heimer*

***Class of 2027:*** *Margery McCrum, Chris Meyer, John Spooner*

***Class of 2028:*** *Belle Coles, Alex O'Pray*