

St. John's Episcopal Church
2023 Yearbook



Reports of Ministries, Activities & Operations

Prepared for
The 127th Annual Meeting of the Parish
Sunday, January 21, 2024

297 Lowell Avenue, Newtonville, Massachusetts

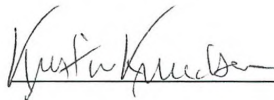
WARRANT

SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH EPISCOPAL

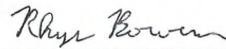
WARRANT FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING OF SAINT JOHN'S PARISH

In accordance with the By-Laws, and as appointed by the Vestry, the Annual Meeting of St. John's Parish of Newtonville MA will be held in the Parish House on Sunday, January 21, 2024, at Noon for the following purposes:

1. To receive the reports of the Priest, Treasurer, parish organizations, committees and delegates, and to take proper action on the same.
2. To receive and take action on the report of the Nominating Committee, and to elect certain parish officers and delegates to the Diocesan Convention and to the Charles River Deanery of the Diocese of Massachusetts.
3. To consider and to act upon any other matters that may properly come before the meeting.



Kristin Knudson, Clerk



Rhys Bowen, Sr. Warden

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THE 127TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH – AGENDA

- ❖ Call to Order
- ❖ Reading of the Warrant
- ❖ Hymn: **Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us** (The Hymnal 1982 #559)
- ❖ Opening Prayer
- ❖ Remembrance of Faithful Departed
- ❖ Approval of the Minutes of 126th Annual Meeting
- ❖ Report of the Junior Warden
- ❖ Report of the Treasurer
- ❖ Report of the Senior Warden
- ❖ Report of the Priest-in-Charge
- ❖ Acknowledgement of Outgoing Vestry Members
- ❖ Report of the Nominating Committee
- ❖ Elections
- ❖ Benediction
- ❖ Hymn: **Rise up, ye saints of God!** (The Hymnal 1982 #551)
- ❖ Adjournment

OPENING HYMN: Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us



1 Lead us, heaven - ly Fa - ther, lead us o'er the world's tem -
 2 Sa - vior, breathe for - give - ness o'er us; all our weak - ness
 3 Spi - rit of our God, de - scend - ing, fill our hearts with



pes - tuous sea; guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
 thou dost know; thou didst tread this earth be - fore us;
 heaven - ly joy; love with ev - ery pas - sion blend - ing,



for we have no help but thee, yet pos - ses - sing
 thou didst feel its keen - est woe; yet un - fear - ing,
 plea - sure that can nev - er cloy; thus pro - vid - ed,



ev - ery bless - ing, if our God our Fa - ther be.
 per - se - ver - ing, to thy pas - sion thou didst go.
 par - doned, guid - ed, noth - ing can our peace des - troy.

Words: James Edmeston (1791-1867), alt. Music: *Dulce carmen*, melody from *An Essay on the Church Plain Chant*, 1782; adapt. *Collection of Motetts or Antiphons*, ca 1840; harm. William Henry Monk (1823-1889).

CLOSING HYMN: Rise up, ye saints of God!

1 Rise up, ye saints of God! Have done with less - er things, give
2 Rise up, ye saints of God! His king - dom tar - ries long: Lord,
3 Lift high the cross of Christ! Tread where his feet have trod; and

heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the King of kings.
bring the day of truth and love and end the night of wrong.
quick-ened by the Spi - rit's power, rise up, ye saints of God!

The musical score is written for three voices (Soprano, Alto, and Tenor/Bass) and piano accompaniment. It is in the key of B-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with a clear harmonic structure. The lyrics are printed below the vocal staves, with the three verses of the hymn clearly delineated. The piano accompaniment provides a steady harmonic foundation for the vocal parts.

Words: William Pierson Merrill (1867-1954), alt. Music: *Festal Song*, William H. Walter (1825-1893).

2023 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Annual Meeting St. John's Parish

January 29, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 11:45. The Warrant read by Kristin Knudson, clerk. Singing of "Lead us Heavenly Father".

An opening prayer was given by Rhys Bowen, Senior Warden.

Remembrance of Mark Slayton, RIP

Approval of the minutes of 2022 Annual Meeting. Becky Snow moved to approve, Anthony Fisher seconded. Approved.

Junior Warden Report

Written report submitted. Biggest issue of the year was collapsing floor in Bowen classroom, due to a combination of improperly installed subfloor and moisture. There were 2 in person work parties this year. Thanks were extended to the former Jr Wardens and others who lovingly care for this building. We've seen a major increase in rentals, which not only generates income, but also increases our visibility in the community. We are a real community resource. Tim is looking forward to attending to more routine maintenance issues and fewer emergency problems.

Stewardship

A direct call from God to take care of each other and of our sacred space. We are presently 8k short of goal for the year. Everyone was asked to consider whether they can help make up that gap.

Treasurer Report

2022 was a VERY good year with a generous surplus. Quickbooks and automatic utility bill pay have been implemented, along with volunteer management in Realm. File management, password management, and an audit were tackled. Diocesan required financial statement has been completed for the Search process. Expenses were lower, particularly personnel. A generous donor allowed us to pay back the boiler loan from the endowment. Surplus funds have been segregated out of operating income and not included in assessment calculations. We have been approved for 38% time clergy, pay and insurance. Utility budget is a guess; between world circumstances and weather it is very difficult to forecast.

Many thanks were extended to Kate Reeder, Audit Committee, Investment Committee, Budget Committee.

Senior Warden Report

Written report submitted. Thanks were extended to parish administrator Kathy Richmond Robinson. Thanks also to Jeffrey Mills for music and tremendous help with liturgy planning. Thanks to Transition Team: Jeffrey Mills, Betsy Blagdon, Cleo Messinger, Sarah Moravik. Thanks to all the priests who have supplied; Rev. Matt Kruger, Rev. Edwin Johnson, Rev. Frank Fornaro, Rev. Phil Jacobs, Rev. David Killian. All have spoken to Rhys at length about our strengths. Tribute to mutual ministry model. Rev. Kruger will be our Easter celebrant.

Transition/Search

We are now working with Canon Martha Hubbard on getting a Bridge priest or Priest-in-Charge. We still hope for a bi-vocational priest but are open to other options. The diocese is encouraging us to think creatively, as bi-vocational candidates are thin on the ground.

Q: How soon is soon? A: We don't know. About 1/3 of parishes in the diocese are looking. There have been more retirements than ordinations in recent years.

Acknowledging outgoing vestry members

Tom Wood and Marina Matuzek. If we are a yacht, Marina is the keel. Tom is always ready to step into the breach, has a depth and breadth of experience.

Nominations

Slate presented. Motion to accept the slate made by Marina Matuzek and seconded by Sarah Moravik. Approved.

Closing prayer: Rhys Bowen.

Hymn "Rise Up Ye Saints of God"

Adjourned: 12:30pm

Respectfully submitted,
Kristin Knudson, Clerk

ADMINISTRATION

JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

The privilege of the Junior Warden is to monitor and maintain the church's physical plant — that is, our building structure, the property around the building, and the use of the building. This has been an exciting year, and I believe an instructional and productive one, and one that has taken us to interesting meetings and official votes. That story arc touches on many of the things that makes our property special, so if you'll allow me, I'll tell that story here.

Over the years, I've met with our City Building Inspector each year and sometime more than once per year as we work with him to make sure our building is safe and to code. Generally, we are, and any time he brings up something to do, it is generally quick and easy to fix, and makes things safer. Last year, during one such meeting, the inspector told me that we needed to let the city know about each of the groups who use our building, as each use was a different certification. That seemed excessive but indeed Bowen has its own certification, so I started that process at the beginning of 2023 by filing with the City.

This opened more than I expected. It turns out, and again for good reason, that any property that is used for more than its original intended purpose needs to have a Special Permit for those uses from the Newton Planning and Development Department. I spent a fair amount of time discussing this with folks there and made good friends. They understood that this seemed odd but were very helpful in navigating the process, so we proceeded. (They also acknowledged that we are not unique in the use of our building for other purposes, especially among religious organizations, although I doubt many have gone through this process.)

The Special Permit really is about the impact that the use of a property will have on the surrounding neighborhood. This is certainly considered for the primary use of the property, but adding additional groups using the property needs to also be evaluated. This make sense if you are a neighbor of such a property; we of course are careful in who we let use our building, and the load it places on the property, but others may not be.

The process gave me a chance to articulate how important we are to the neighborhood and to the City. Our new friends at the Planning Department took my input, asked many questions, and produced the memo that I've attached to this report. The major "load" issue had to do with parking — again, if you lived in the neighborhood of a property that abused its parking load, you'd want the City to look into it. The memo, while filled with City-ese language, boils down to us asking for an additional 12 parking slots. We don't really need them, but the (illogical) way that property load is calculated meant we needed the extra spaces. The Planning Department determined that it "is not concerned" (their low-key way to say this isn't an issue) with our use of the building, that the extra slots were lot an issue, and that we provide a benefit to the City.

As normal in property use cases, the neighborhood got notification of the public hearing and were asked for comment. You may recall seeing the Public Notice sign posted along Otis Street.

The public hearing before the Land Use Committee of the Newton City Council was held on Tuesday, November 14, 2023, and I attended in person along with Melissa Bernstein from the Newton Theatre Company as support. There were quite a few petitions, and I think we were 4th on the agenda. The representative from the Planning Department spoke first and laid out the issue, the considerations for the committee, and the recommendation of the Planning Department. Her presentation largely followed the attached memo; it was professional and factual and presented the benefits of our petition. I then spoke about

our impact on the community. No one from the public spoke. A member of the Land Use Committee said, “this is a no brainer” and another said “this is an appropriate use of such spaces” and all voted in our favor. On to the next agenda item.

Later I got the official record of the City Council vote and a stamped document that will be filed with the Registry of Deeds in Cambridge. We are now in full compliance with the City’s requirements for use of our space. I am certain we’re among a very small number who are.

That ends the process, but not the story. This exercise, while somewhat annoying and definitely gave me angst, put into the official City Record what we — a small church on a neighborhood corner — do for the wider community. The folks we host serve a large number of important groups and concerns and offer opportunities that would be prohibitively expensive where they to seek other meeting spaces. Our building is one of our biggest outreach assets, and the support I got from our groups while compiling the data for the Planning Department showed that our space is well loved and much appreciated. There may be chairs in odd places at times, or scheduling conflicts, but overall, we are good hosts, and we make a difference that isn’t always obvious.

Oh, and other stuff happened this year, too. Our Brawn Trust was hard at work with long and short-term issues like lighting, electricity, rebuilding a back-side roof, new faucets and new bathroom hand bars, new paint in the kitchen, workdays, and quick reaction calls for aid. Our boiler, only 5 years old, is having issues and we’re working with the HVAC company to understand and fix that. We have longer range dreams for the building, like renovating the upstairs bathroom and continuing to reduce our carbon footprint.

This also brings to a close my two terms as Junior Warden, and it has been a joy and honor to be a part of keeping our beautiful spaces alive and well. Special thanks to all who have been on the receiving end of my texts or calls or emails — your love for this place has been my inspiration. And great gratitude goes to our Senior Warden who has lifted and supported his Junior Warden in more ways that he knows.

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Strayer

2023 TREASURER'S REPORT

Financially, St. John had another very positive year in 2023. A combination of factors led to a very large surplus this year.

2023 Edition: What has the Treasurer done?

- Worked with Vestry to set up a policy for the amount of cash needed — \$60,000 — in our bank account.
- Moved the rest of the cash into the Schwab money market account, so it is now earning interest.
- Performed financial and administrative tasks related to the clergy hiring process.
- Submitted 2022 Parochial Report to the diocese.
- Switched payroll to twice a month instead of every two weeks.
- Applied for and received the missing Employee Retention Credit checks from the IRS.
- Started an image inventory of the parish assets.

Following are notes about 2023 income and expenses, as well as 2024 budget notes. After those notes is a greatly simplified table with rounded 2023 Actual and Budget results, along with rounded 2024 budget numbers. To see the full, detailed financial reports, please refer to the Appendix which also includes several prior years of results. Please note that the 2023 results are unaudited and provisional.

2023 Income Notes

Our income from pledges and donations was lower than budgeted, but our rental income was significantly higher than budget, so the income came in at a little over budget.

2023 Expense Notes

We knew that our personnel costs would be lower than expected, since we budgeted for a full year of settled clergy coverage. Combining that with our conservative 2023 utility estimate means that our expenses were about \$50,000 lower than budgeted.

2023 Investment Draw Notes

In 2023, we elected to draw 2% from the investments instead of 4% as budgeted. Because of our lower expenses, we did not use all of the investment draw and grants received during the year, so the Vestry voted to reclassify \$40,000 of the funds out of Operating Income and back into Equity. This results in a lower reported actual number for Investments and grant income in the Appendix. Our Diocesan Assessment is based on Operating Income as reported in the Parochial Report to the national church, so this reclassification is important. If we spend this money on operating expenses in the future, we will report that amount as income in the Parochial Report. Please see the Endowment Report for information on investment performance.

2023 Other Income Notes

As a reminder, part of the fund accounting protocol is to separate the income that we receive for the Capital fund and the donations that we forward to Centre Street Food Pantry or that are directed to the Rector's Discretionary Fund. These income amounts are listed toward the end of the report in Other Income. This section is also where we reported the very generous donation to the Endowment. Also included in this section are 2024 pledge payments that are received in 2023. These will be recognized as operating income in 2024. The budget numbers are only guesses at what we will receive, since they are all at the discretion of the donor.

2023 Other Expense Notes

Similar to how Income is treated, there are some Expense accounts that are not listed in the Operating Expense section but are listed in Other Expenses. These include the disbursements that we make to Centre Street Food Pantry for the Open Plate donations during services that we share with other parishes, and the funds that we remit to the Rector's Discretionary Fund that were donated specifically for that purpose. Capital expenses in 2023 were repair of a classroom floor and painting the downstairs kitchen ceiling. Except for capital expenditures, these expenses are largely determined by the Other Income received.

2022 Audit Notes

While we prepared for an audit of our 2022 finances, there were some scheduling issues with the Audit Committee and the audit was not completed. We may wish to consider an outside audit for 2022 and 2023, since it is good practice to do that periodically.

2024 Budget Notes

A draft 2024 budget was presented to the Vestry on Wednesday, January 3, 2024. The Budget Committee has been diligent in their research and deliberation.

- As of January 11, the parish currently has \$76,000 in pledges from 21 donors in hand. Previous experience leads us to believe that a few more donors will probably pledge. As a comparison, in all of 2023 we had \$76,000 pledged from 27 donors, so we expect the 2024 pledge amount will increase.
- We are budgeting a little lower for Open Plate this year, because we are considering ways to increase our Outreach contributions, and this may include plate collections for Outreach.
- We expect to take 4% from our investments at Schwab, and we are required to take any income from the Diocesan Investment Trust fund. The Atwood Trust, which we do not own, always tells us that they will send us \$4,000, but there is often more after their trust accounting is finished.
- Clergy Salary/Housing Allowance is budgeted at the diocesan Total Clergy Compensation for 38% (15 hours/week) time.
- The Vestry has voted to increase the salary of our Music Director and Administrator by 3%. There is also provision for bonuses.
- The administrative budget includes Zoom fees and printing supply costs.
- Previously, our electrical rates were governed by a 2020 contract. We have received notice of a 20% increase in the generation charges which make up about half the bill. Other utility items were budgeted based on 2023 actual results.
- In the Other Expenditures portion of the budget, there is \$7500 for Organ Maintenance and Repair. Long overdue cleaning and upgrades are contemplated as part of 2024 Capital spending.
- Chancel lights, a new office computer as well as AV/IT upgrades are planned and included in the Capital spending.

Below is the rounded and summarized table for 2023 Actual, 2023 Budget and 2024 Budget for Operating Income and Expense. Please refer to the Appendix for precise information, as well as non-operating figures.

	2023 Actual	2023 Budget	2024 Budget	Notes
Pledges and Donations	\$87,000	\$93,000	\$91,000	
Investment Income	\$25,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	Only 2% draw in '23. Expect 4%.
Rentals	\$73,000	\$65,000	\$68,000	
Fundraising	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Other Income	\$5,000	\$2,600	\$3,000	Driven by money market interest
Diocesan Grants	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Grants	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	Rec'd 2021 ERC payments in '23.
Total Income	\$205,000	\$201,000	\$202,000	
Payroll	\$60,000	\$98,000	\$92,000	Insurance reimbursement waived
Worship and Music	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	Increased soloists and maintenance
Formation	\$200	\$1,350	\$1,000	
Office and Admin	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$4,000	
Utilities	\$20,000	\$27,000	\$22,000	
Building	\$39,000	\$37,000	\$40,000	
Inreach Activities	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	Parish gatherings and Vestry Retreat
Insurance	\$11,000	\$9,000	\$11,000	
Assessment	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$12,000	
Outreach	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$2,500	
Total Expense	\$152,000	\$197,000	\$192,000	
Net Income	\$53,0000	\$4,0000	\$10,000	

Summary

Thanks to the generosity of our donors past and present, the performance of our investments, and the larger community support in the form of rental income, St. John's is blessed to be in a time of abundance, having a strong financial position as we envision our future together.

Thanks are due to the entire team of financial volunteers who share the work:

Budget Committee: Laura Brewer, Libby Seaman, Becky Snow, and Tom Wood

Counters: The entire Vestry

Investments: Jeff Barrell and Mike McKay

REALM Master and Collections Depositor and Reconciliation Overseer: Tom Wood

Cheerfully submitted,

Betsy Blagdon

SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

A fox knows many things, but a hedgehog knows one big thing (Archilochus, with promotional assistance from Isaiah Berlin).

Dear Fellow-Ministers of St. John's,

In my work as Senior Warden in 2023, I often felt like both the fox and the hedgehog in Archilochus's epigram. As a fox, it was my privilege to observe the myriad details of parish administration and the countless contributions made by St. John's fellow-ministers to our shared parish life. Collectively we kept the parish running smoothly, maintaining old programs and starting some new ones. We kept the church open, the candles lit, the liturgy spoken and sung, and our gifts to the community and to one another abundant. It's a lot to keep track of, even for a fox. On the other hand, like a hedgehog I found my time as Senior Warden in 2023 centripetally drawn to one big thing — this was the year St. John's successfully completed its clergy transition and inaugurated the ministry of Michael Thompson as our Priest-in-Charge. We ran the big race that was set before us, and together we got across the finish line. As a parish we can take pride in our perseverance. Endurance produces character.

Here are a few of the fox's many things in 2023. We held fast to two new ministries that we started during the COVID years, Thursday evening Compline service and the Antiracism group. These shoots are now firmly grafted into our parish vine, and they continue to bear fruit. We restarted Fellowship Group in October, and we are building momentum with monthly meetings at the church. With luck we will soon return to meeting in fellow-ministers' homes for Bible study, camaraderie, and of course great food. We nurtured our close collaboration with Trinity Newton Centre, sharing many services (Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Trinity Sunday, among others) and renewing our Summer Swap in the months of July (at Trinity) and August (at St. John's). On Jul. 9 we made good use of what we learned during transition, introducing Trinity to lay-led Morning Prayer; they were impressed and explicitly thanked us. St. John's made many contributions to Diocesan programs, punching well above our weight as a small parish: on Feb. 13 we were invited to make a presentation at a Diocesan workshop on inter-parish collaborations, and we promoted as a model for others our relationship with Trinity Newton Centre; on Oct. 14 we sent a delegation to the annual meeting of Episcopal City Mission, supporting that group's work on shrinking the racial wealth gap in Massachusetts; and on Nov. 23 a small group from St. John's served at MANNA Ministry's Thanksgiving Dinner (thank you, Gilpin family). As Michael Thompson likes to put it, St. John's has places to go, and in 2023 we went.

We experimented with new ways of doing church in the digital age. We sustained and refined our weekly streaming broadcast of Sunday 10 a.m. service (thank you to the IT ministers for their tireless work). The livestream is a great boon to members of the parish who have difficulty, of any sort, getting to church. The Vestry began providing a virtual option for its members to attend monthly meetings, and this increased participation and bolstered the thoroughness of deliberations. We steadily increased the management of rota duties in our Realm platform, thereby facilitating the swapping of assignments, and automating reminder notices (big thanks to Tom Wood and Betsy Blagdon). We also continued work in 2023 on transforming the Junior Warden position at St. John's from an office held by a single person to a flexible, synergistic team endeavor — what Tim Strayer has dubbed “the Brawn Trust.” Special thanks to Jeff Barrell, Brian Goeselt, Alastair Battson, Laura Brewer, and Cole Stanton for making this work, under the thoughtful and sedulous leadership of Tim Strayer.

The hedgehog's One Big Thing for St. John's in 2023 was forging ahead through the second half of our clergy transition, culminating in the calling and installation of our new Priest-in-Charge Michael Thompson.

Throughout the year — when we had no priest-in-charge, and when Michael was still a Deacon for his first three months — we worked hard to recruit supply priests so that we could celebrate the Eucharist as many Sundays as possible. Finding supply priests sometimes felt like fishing in empty seas, but we did better than many other parishes in transition and were able to have Eucharist services 75% of the time (39 Sundays out of 53). The supply priests who preached and ministered to us in 2023 were a constellation of guiding lights: Phil Jacobs, Edwin Johnson, Joyce Scherer-Hoock, Dan Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, Elise Feyerherm, Tara Soughers, Katharine Black, David Killian, and Matt Kruger. These visiting ministers were a great blessing to St. John's, and we thank them and hope they can renew their bonds of friendship and service to the parish in the future. Three other priests, not supply per se, also succored us in occasions of need: Todd Miller, Edie Dolnikowski, and Greg Perez (who heroically filled in on short notice on Christmas Eve). As Senior Warden it was my privilege to line up these supply priests and coordinate their visits. Every one of them reported to me that they enjoyed ministering at St. John's and would eagerly do it again — which most of them did. This is a tribute to the warm, welcoming, and affirming spirit of our parish, and we should take pride in our collective cordiality and attentiveness.

We could not have stayed on track through transition without the creativity and devotion of our Transition Team: Betsy Blagdon, Cleo Messinger, Jeffrey Mills, and Sarah Moravick (with help from Libby Seaman down the home stretch). We owe them a great but salutary debt of gratitude. In the course of the year the Transition Team stage-managed a series of memorable delights: Super Chocolate Sunday (Feb. 12); Simnel Sunday (Mar. 19); Spring Sunday Supper (May 7); Bella Vita Luncheon to inaugurate Deacon Michael's tenure (Sep. 10); and the triumphant reception to mark Michael's ordination (Dec. 16). These transition special events kept us in community with one another and gave us all-important strength for meeting ongoing challenges.

Mutual Ministry is the special charism of St. John's, and it held us in good stead throughout the transition. There are too many fellow-ministers for me to list here who stepped up during the year and kept our church life active and vital — thank you especially to all who served as Lay Preachers and Morning Prayer Officiants, ensuring by their labors that St. John's held to its normal schedule of worship services. The Vestry, too, redoubled its efforts to guide the parish through transition, especially in the third quarter of the year when the Diocese presented Michael Thompson's candidacy for our clergy job opening. The Vestry conducted a deliberate, thoughtful, and prayerful discernment process to evaluate how well Michael fit our needs and we fit his. The happy result you all know: the Vestry voted on Jul. 23 to call Michael Thompson as our Deacon and Priest-to-be, and Michael joyfully accepted our call, and we began our new shared ministry on Sunday, Sep. 10 — precisely one year after the parish's last Priest-in-Charge, Fr. Eric Litman, departed. From September through the end of the year we rounded off the transition as we worked hard to welcome Michael, settle him in and make him feel at home, and integrate him into our Mutual Ministry model. We provided the requisite formal endorsement to Michael's application for ordination to the priesthood and hosted his Ordination Service on Dec. 16 — the first time in memory that our little stone church has performed this ecclesiastical function (thank you to the Altar Guild, who took it in their usual graceful stride). Our work is not done. As we turn to 2024 we must continue to listen carefully to Michael's good news for us, work together (Michael's favorite word) with him, and make sure that we are open to the new directions in which St. John's can go post-transition.

Peace be with you,
Rhys Bowen

PRIEST-IN-CHARGE'S REPORT

Dear Beloved People of St. John's,

While it's a little odd for me to say given that I only began ministry with you in early September, what a year it has been! As you know, this parish spent three-quarters of last year without permanent clergy leadership. And, throughout my discernment with the Vestry and my first several months here, it is immediately clear that you have *lived* Paul's words from Ephesians, allowing God to work in you to do infinitely more than any of us can ask or imagine.

You offered your whole selves, body and soul, to sustaining and nourishing this community — and I continue to witness you do this every day. At St. John's, all people come together, offering their time, skills, and in-kind and financial support to do God's work in the world. You took up the mantle as leaders of this parish, witnessing to God's profound love in the world by living into the promises of our Baptismal Covenant.

You stepped up to lead worship, giving your time, hands, and voices to glorify God in this place. Universally, every priest I have spoken with who has offered the gifts of their ministry to this parish during the interim period has told me of their sheer delight in being here. They have been awed by how deeply engaged the People of St. John's are in worship. This is so much more than simply showing up on Sundays and "going through the motions." You take seriously that worship is the work of *all* of us, the entire Body of Christ.

You kept the many ministries of this parish going and thriving. From your unwavering support of the Centre Street Food Pantry to making casseroles for MANNA to providing grocery cards to those in need, in a time in which it would have been so easy to turn your focus entirely inward, you looked outward. You answered the call to continue God's work in the world and you remained loving engaged in supporting our neighbors.

You continued to use the bountiful gift of the church building to provide space for community gatherings. In the course of his first-rate work securing the necessary parking permissions for the groups that meet in our building, Tim Strayer radiated enthusiasm about just how many groups meet here, including the Newton Theater Company, Living Vow Zen, and many more.

And there is, of course, the Bowen School. I have personally experienced the delight of young voices learning and wondering as I've worked in the parish office. Indeed, I remember clearly being in the Sanctuary with the door open on a weekday leading up to the ordination. I saw little faces peek in and heard a young voice say excitedly, "Ooooooo! The Church!" That is a key part of our mission: providing safe and welcoming space for all people to know and feel that they are loved. And there is no other word to describe it than enthusiasm, a word whose roots mean "filled with God."

When I arrived in September, I stepped into a thriving parish committed to testifying to God's love in the world. You welcomed me as if I had always been here. You have made space for my ministry, while inviting me to join you in the work you have been doing. You have eagerly joined me in wondering and discerning what God is calling us to do in our ministry together. And wow has that already borne delicious fruit.

Building on St. John's close relationship with Trinity Newton Centre, we have collaborated with Grace Newton Corner and St. Paul's Newton Highlands on a few services. I have heard from all involved excitement about what else we can do together. Even just a bit of time together has launched conversations about other gifts we can offer one another. You know that collaboration is an important priority in our parish, but for me it is much more. Working together is how we build up the Body of Christ. Working together is how we see the face of God in our neighbors and in the world around us. Working together is how we change the world. Collaboration is not just a buzzword or the latest church fad. It is nothing short of God's calling to us.

During our time together so far, we shared a major milestone in my life and ministry: my ordination to the priesthood. This was, of course, huge for me personally, but the ability to share it with you made it so much sweeter. I will always be profoundly touched and humbled by how this community came together to make this a glorious occasion. I am grateful beyond words to all of you. From the Altar Guild polishing and sprucing up everything to Jeffrey and the Choir's work in providing top-notch music to your eagerly taking on roles in the service to the Transition Committee's planning of an abundant reception and so much more — all in the midst of an already busy December — you eagerly engaged in the mutual ministry that is central to St. John's ethos.

You've all heard me preach and talk a lot about mission. By now, you know well that I view mission, our ministry inside the walls of this parish and reaching out to the wider community, as central to God's call to us. Even the small glimpse this report provides into this parish's ministry makes clear that this is a missional community. As we look toward what is ahead in our ministry together, I hope that, together, we will highlight that work and add to it.

We should recognize that all the work we already do, all the things our time, talent, and treasure support, is mission work. It is all walking the walk of our Baptismal Covenant: continuing in community, reconciling with each other and our neighbors, proclaiming God's love for all creation, finding Christ in all people, welcoming all people, loving all people, and advocating for justice and peace in our world.

I look forward to building on that work with you and to listening to the Holy Spirit with you to discern what is next. This is not to say that what we already do is not good enough. Quite the opposite. Our call to do more arises from the fact that God is always calling us toward more. God is always calling us into deeper relationship with the Creator and with one another. God is always calling us to love more. God is always calling us toward abundance because abundance is part of the goodness God intended for us from the first moment of creation.

I will leave you with and ask you to continue to reflect on words you know so well, not only because you've heard them, but because you live them:

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

May our loving Creator, the Source of Light and Life, continue to bless and sustain you all.

Peace, love, and blessings,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Michael +". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Michael Thompson

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Officers of the Vestry

Nominees for two-year term through January 2026:

Senior Warden: Kristin Knudson

Junior Warden: Laura Brewer

Nominees for one-year term through January 2025:

Treasurer: Betsy Blagdon

Clerk: Becky Snow

Members of the Vestry

Nominee for two-year term through January 2026: Alexandra Stanton

Nominees for three-year term through January 2027: Elizabeth Seaman, Alastair Battson

Delegates to Diocesan Convention

Nominees for one-year term through January 2025: Jane Huston, Marina Matuzek, Elizabeth Seaman (Alternate)

Lay Delegates to Charles River Deanery

Nominees for one-year term through January 2025: Becky Snow, Cleo Messinger

Respectfully submitted by the Nominating Committee,

Jeff Barrell, Patty Schoeck, Tim Strayer, Rhys Bowen

ENDOWMENT REPORT 2023

A great year for our endowment. The last time our principal exceeded \$1 Million was at the end of 2021, which then retreated in 2022 as the markets saw inflation and rising interest rates. The expected recession did not materialize and the markets rebounded in Q3 and Q4 of 2023. Our endowment returned 16% this year compared to -4.4% last year. Note there were no transfers out of the endowment in Q2, Q3, or Q4 of 2023. The treasurer has reported positive cash flows mainly due to no rector salary and transfers were not needed to pay our bills. Thankfully this was a temporary condition.

Our tactic the past few years has been to move our bond fund holdings into short term CDs or equities as rising interest rates degraded the value of bonds. This year, we moved \$68K from an expired CD into an Equity-Income fund. Another expired CD was moved into a TIP fund (Treasuries with Inflation Protection). We also added a money market holding (SVNXX) that pays a higher interest rate (~5%) than cash. Our allocation to equities increased from 60% to 67% this year. Our endowment is like a retirement saving account with no end date, therefore, a higher allocation to stocks will more likely keep up with or outpace inflation.

Looking forward, technology will continue to produce robust returns as AI (Artificial Intelligence) improves productivity in many areas of our economy. The transition to green energy will hopefully accelerate, which could increase inflation IF fossil fuels are taxed to finance this transition. Wage inflation will continue as long as housing remains unaffordable for many workers. Our strategy has been to build a portfolio spread across many sectors of the economy with low cost mutual funds and ETFs. We do not actively trade based on the latest news or trends, we do not trade options or other short term tactics. We do not hold individual stocks. We watch economic trends, particularly inflationary trends that will degrade our principal. Our portfolio is conservative and will hopefully continue to produce returns for many years to come.

Respectfully submitted,
The Endowment Committee:
Michael McKay and Jeff Barrell

STEWARDSHIP REPORT “Drawing Water from the Well”

Our theme for the 2024 Stewardship Season is taken from the several bible stories involving a well: Jesus traveling from Judea to Galilee stopping at Jacob’s well in Sychar, and Rebekah meeting the man Abraham sent to find a wife for Isaac. From the Stewardship Packet, “Jesus encourages us to think of drawing from our resources, not as a matter of scarcity, but as one of abundance. Some wells are always full and do not risk running dry, because they constantly refill on their own. How might this reframing describe our shared life at St. John’s? Think of the constantly replenishing blessings in our community: fellowship, mutual ministry, the calling of new clergy. These are the springs and freshets that we draw upon when we answer the call to stewardship. We give from, and in furtherance of, the gifts we receive from our fellow-ministers. We give in anticipation and support of the free-flowing ministry of our new Deacon (soon Priest!) Michael. We give generously, so that all the camels are watered and no one goes thirsty.”

We began planning Stewardship early this year, and in fact had the packet out and in the mail well before our normal time, but it also coincided nicely with the welcoming of Michael to our family. As Michael says in his letter in the packet, “Stewardship is about mission and hope,” which fits right in with how St. John’s lives every day, not just Stewardship Season.

The pledged amount this year is approximately what we anticipated and about the same as last year. The number of pledges, however, has fallen somewhat. This means fewer people are giving more. Our wells are deep, to stay within the metaphor, but we also need to broaden our sources of life sustaining waters. This is where our mission and hope come in. We look forward to a prosperous year, one filled with fellowship and joy, where, as the Sermon says, “every leaf you rake, every muffin you bake, every hand you shake strengthens the sinews of the Church and your connection to God.”

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Strayer and Rhys Bowen

The 2024 Stewardship Committee Co-Chairs

EDUCATION PROGRAMS MEETING AT ST. JOHN’S

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY AT ST. JOHN’S: Report of The Administrative Mentor

Education for Ministry (EfM) is a program that runs for four academic years, covering the entirety of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, Church History, Theology, Liturgy, and Ethics. The program is administered by the School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, and has been educating adults in the US, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. Members of the seminar group commit to one academic year of study and theological reflection at a time, paying a yearly tuition of under \$15 per week for all textbooks and administrative costs. Since 1975, EfM has provided theological education to over 80,000 people internationally.

EfM is more than a Bible study. At the core of the program is the practice of theological reflection, which is an organized way of exploring matters of everyday personal life experience, Christian tradition (Scripture stories, hymns, etc.), and contemporary culture (current news, theatre, movies, popular songs, etc.) and finding connections among these sources/influences on our lives, discovering how we might begin to apply the principles of Christian theology and ethics to what we do and how we pray.

The seminar group at Saint John’s meets Monday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 pm, in person. Cathy Gallant, a graduate of the program, serves as Co-Mentor. Members are from St. John’s (Jeff Barrell, Jeffrey DiIulio, Brian Goeselt, Jane Huston, Marina Matuzek, and Tim Strayer), Trinity Church in Newton Centre, St. Paul’s Newton Highlands, Our Redeemer, Lexington, and St. Elizabeth’s, Sudbury. Five of the members are in their fourth and final year of the program (emphasis on theology, ethics, and interfaith dialogue); none are in Year Three (Christian history), three in Year Two (New Testament), and three in Year One (Old Testament).

We will have an Open House meeting in February for those who might like to see what EfM is all about. There will be six available places for new participants beginning in September, with enrollment happening during May and June. If you are interested or are just plain curious, please speak to me or Cathy, to someone who is part of the group, or to Betsy Blagdon or Patty Schoeck, graduates of the program.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey Mills

BOWEN COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOL



96 OTIS STREET NEWTONVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02460
(617)332-3923 www.bowencoop.org

January 2024

This is my tenth year as Director of the Bowen Cooperative Nursery School, and I am pleased to say we are now back to a semblance of normal! We are back to our Pre-COVID routines and activities; parents in the classrooms, in-person fundraisers, and our annual whole school events such as our pancake breakfast and monthly coffees.

Our relationship with St. John's continues to be strong. We welcome Rev. Michael Thompson and look forward to working with him. We are appreciative of everything Tim, Rhys, and Jeff do to ensure we are running smoothly and safely and have heat and light! It is comforting to know that there is always someone willing and able to respond to our calls, whether it is a (false) carbon monoxide alarm, a question about our wireless network, or helping us manage use of the space in the building.

We were fully enrolled for the 2022-2023 school year. We made the decision to reduce class size by 2 children in our 3-year-old class in order to give more individual attention to each child, and we plan to continue to run with a smaller class size as long as it is financially possible.

Once again, we had no staff turnover this year! Karen Solari is in her 9th year as Lead Teacher in the 3-Day classroom, Lisa Sudan continues as her Assistant Teacher, and also provides weekly music classes. Caroline Silva and Fanny Gouyou-Beauchamps are co-teaching for their 4th year in the 5-Day classroom. Emily Carroll is in her 6th year as the Lead Teacher in Pre-K with Stephanie Sipe remaining on as her Assistant. Martine Sifakis remains our floating substitute, science teacher, and Extended Day teacher. We continue to offer weekly creative movement classes with Be Ahead of the Game.

In October we opened enrollment for the 2024-2025 school year, and currently have 38 spots filled, with a few spots remaining in our 3-year-old and Pre-K classrooms. We hope to be fully enrolled for next year. We continue to offer scholarships to families in need. Our families continue to be very supportive in the work that they do on the Board of Directors.

Our Giving Tree for 2023 went to the Condon School in South Boston. We hung donation "leaves" on the tree next to our sign on Otis Street and collected items for these underserved families throughout January. We also coordinated with Riverside Community Care to provide three families with Thanksgiving meals, prepared by our teachers and children.

We held two in-person fundraisers in 2023 school year, a spring event with a camping theme, and a fall disco night. Both were well attended and a lot of fun! As a cooperative, we are happy to be able to once again hold community events and provide opportunities for families to socialize.

As always, we thank Saint John's for providing a happy and safe home for Bowen!

PARISH DEVELOPMENT • FELLOWSHIP • OUTREACH

SERMON GROUP

The sermon group ministry has provided lay preaching at St Johns for the past 20+ years. Our objective is to provide different perspectives to the lectionary readings and apply them to today's issues and challenges. Our process is to meet beforehand and discuss the readings, offering ideas and insights. After the sermon, we then meet and provide feedback. Sermons address the readings and avoid politics and personal opinions. It is an important and unusual shared ministry for Boston diocese.

The sermon group was actively involved in 2023, providing 13 sermons. We offered sermons for Morning Prayer when a substitute priest was not available. Our part-time Priest-in-Charge has challenged us to provide two sermons per month, excluding July & August, or 18 sermons in 2024. This greatly reduces Michael's time commitments and allows more time for his regular job and other Church activities. It also challenges each member of our group to preach at least 2 sermons in 2024.

Thanks to our preachers: Jeffrey Mills, Laura Brewer, Tim Strayer, Betsy Blagdon, Jeff Barrell, Cathy Gallant, Candy Jones, Brian Goeselt, and Rhys Bowen. Candy and Brian were new preachers this year. Special thanks also to Peter Wenner, who serves as mentor and advisor, who reminds us that God's grace is ever present and sustaining, yet is rarely mentioned or understood.

We welcome anyone to join our meetings and listen to and/or contribute to our discussions. We do not push people into the pulpit. Your perspectives and thoughts add valuable diversity, depth, and layers to our sermons. We encourage and support those willing to preach.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Barrell

ANTIRACISM MINISTRY

"Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? I will with God's help." (Baptismal Covenant)

The Antiracism Ministry was active in 2023:

Projects

- Completed genealogical and historical research and published the genealogy, "St. John's Founder and Benefactor Genealogy Summary", and report, "Investigating Elements of Racial Injustice and Privilege Among the Ancestors of St. John's Founding Families." **See the summary of the report in this Annual Report.**
- Researched wording from several institutions including the Episcopal Dioceses of Massachusetts and drafted an Indigenous Peoples' Land Acknowledgement
- Sponsored two coffee hours
- Prepared and displayed educational poster boards about the Antiracism Ministry's activities from the past two years

Activities

- Field Trip to the Royall House and Slave Quarters in Medford
- Hosted visitors from the Episcopal City Mission (ECM) at 2 meetings
- Participated in two “Bridging the Racial Wealth Gap” seminars by ECM and attended the ECM Annual meeting
- Individuals visited museum exhibits about Black culture, history, and art.

Books Read and Discussed

- *Ladder to the Light: An Indigenous Elder’s Meditation on Hope and Courage* by the Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston.
- *The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Peniel E. Joseph.
- Poetry by BIPOC poets
- *The Violin Conspiracy* by Brendon Slocumb
- *By Hands Now Known: Jim Crow’s Legal Executioners* by Margaret A. Burnham.

The minutes from every meeting are posted on the St. John’s bulletin board.

The Antiracism Ministry meets monthly by Zoom. If interested in participating, contact Becky Snow (rvsbres@verizon.net).

Respectfully submitted,
Becky Snow

* * * * *

Summary: Investigating Elements of Racial Injustice and Privilege Among the Ancestors of St. John’s Founding Families

St. John’s Episcopal Church, Newtonville, MA
October 16, 2023

Slavery was legal in the North American British Colonies from the early 1600’s to the mid 1700’s and persisted in some northeast states more than 50 years beyond the official end of slavery. The economy of the region was tightly entwined with the slave trade. Slave traders bought and sold people to prominent families for work in their homes or in agricultural endeavors. Investors bought shares in ships used in the Intra-American and Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Craftsmen built or repaired slave ships or refitted commercial ships for the slave trade. Mariners were employed as captains or crew for slave voyages. New England and New York based insurance companies insured owners against death of enslaved people during transport or against injury of the enslaved during their labor. Farmers and fishermen sold meat, fish, wheat, and vegetables to plantations in the West Indies to feed enslaved laborers. New England textile mills and rum distilleries received raw materials produced by enslaved people in Southern states or West Indies plantations.

St. John’s Episcopal Church in Newtonville, Massachusetts was founded in 1897. All the founders were born after the official end of slavery in Massachusetts in 1783. The St. John’s Antiracism Ministry conducted genealogical research to determine if the ancestors of the parish founders or prominent benefactors had a connection to slavery or racial injustices in the North American British Colonies and/or the antebellum United States. In addition, we wished to know if St. John’s founders or benefactors benefited from a transfer of intergenerational wealth from their ancestors.

Using ancestry.com, a genealogy database of family histories and historical documents, the lineal ancestors of parish founders and benefactors and the resulting family trees were drawn; siblings of the ancestors were not recorded. Pertinent life dates, locations, and occupations were documented. The family trees were summarized and annotated in a document, St. Johns Founder & Benefactor Genealogy Summary. The first and last names of ancestors of founders or benefactors were cross-referenced with lists of names of enslavers found in books, reports, and blogs about slavery in northeast American colonies and in the Intra-American and Trans-Atlantic Slave Voyages databases (<https://www.slavevoyages.org/>).

There were no first and last names of ancestors of founders or benefactors who matched the names of owners of enslaved people published in the books and reports. One of the largest slave trading families in the country was directly related to one of the former rectors of St. John's. There were a few ancestor names found among the lists of slave ship owners and captains and a few others who may have been engaged in building slave ships. There were several ancestors who worked in industries whose supply chain was likely fed by plantations in the southern or mid-Atlantic United States or the West Indies where enslaved people harvested the raw materials. A few of the ancestors were known missionaries to Indigenous People in what was known as Plymouth Colony. Although it is difficult to document and quantify, it is likely that some ancestors of St. John's founders and benefactors benefited from white privilege and may have amassed family wealth through the ill-gotten gains originating in the slave trade or with slave labor. There are members of the current congregation whose ancestors enslaved people.

With the exception of Indigenous People and subsistence farmers, many residents of colonial New England benefited from the labor of unpaid or exploited people. The parallel to society of the 21st Century is striking and provides some context for our understanding of history. It is on the backs of enslaved, poorly paid, or exploited people that minerals and metals are mined for electronic devices, food is grown, harvested or slaughtered and packaged for our dinner tables, and soft goods are manufactured to clothe our bodies and outfit our homes. Rarely does society consider the injustice of this type of labor when purchasing these goods. If we as Episcopalians are to live into our Baptismal Covenant, "Will you persevere in resisting evil and when you fall into sin repent and return to the Lord? Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?", then we need to learn about — and to repent for — the evils we have done, or the evils done on our behalf and to do our part to repair those systemic injustices. Discovering the racial history of St. John's is the first step on the road to repentance and efforts toward repair of those relationships.

* * * * *

CHARLES RIVER DEANERY

“The congregations of our diocese are grouped into 12 deaneries whose boundaries are drawn according to natural watersheds, reminding us of our connections with God’s creation and symbolic of the waters of Baptism.”

“Each of the deaneries has a dean — a priest appointed by the bishops to enhance pastoral care and communication among the clergy of the respective deanery.” Fr. Todd Miller from Trinity Church, Newton Centre, is the Dean of the Charles River Deanery (CRD). Becky Snow and Cleo Messinger were elected as the St. John’s representatives to the Deanery.

The business of the Deanery occurred at a May and a September meeting:

1. Rev. Jay Weldon from Church of the Good Shepherd, Waban, was elected as the Clerical Delegate to Diocesan Council. G. Donald Ferree, Jr. from Grace Church, Newton, was elected as the lay delegate to the Diocesan Council.
2. David Montgomery of St. Paul’s, Newton Highlands, proposed parishes in the Charles River Deanery find new ways to collaborate. This could include inclusion in events or suggesting solutions to administrative or physical infrastructure challenges.
3. Church of the Redeemer, Chestnut Hill, introduced a Service Project Proposal for Deanery parishes. “FUEL is a program based at Church of the Redeemer, Chestnut Hill. Its mission is to provide weekend breakfasts and lunches for food insecure school-age children. Currently the program provides about 180 bags of food each week during the school year to schools in Newton, the St. Stephen’s afterschool program in the South End and the Epiphany school in Dorchester. There is a great, largely unmet need for personal care items, too.” Becky Snow attended a FUEL Volunteer session at Church of the Redeemer, wrote a summary of her observations, and discussed it at the Antiracism Ministry meeting as a possible way to encourage St. John’s outreach volunteerism and to help alleviate food insecurity in local and Greater Boston BIPOC communities. More information will be forthcoming for all of St. John’s.
4. The Diocesan Sending and Serving (matching) Grant for \$1,350 was awarded to Church of the Good Shepherd, Waban, for Diakonie’s Ukrainian Migrant Center which supports “new arrivals from Ukraine; migrants in need of housing, school, clothing, and translation; child and adolescent counseling.”
5. The Diocesan House of Mercy Grant for \$2500 was awarded to Church of the Good Shepherd, Waban, for The Second Step, Newton, which “provides emergency housing for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. It provides both a safe space to escape domestic abuse, and it offers counseling and services to help women escape the relationships long-term.” From The Second Step’s 2022 Annual Report, they served 300 adults, 500 children, 58 people in residency, and 21,000 days and nights of safe shelter.

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Snow and Cleo Messinger

BOOK GROUP

Book Groups are popular — not only because people like to read, but also because it is a great social outlet! And, my goodness, St. John's Book Group members are such excellent sources of critical thinking, engaging mindsets, and overall delightful personalities to be in the company of!

Truly!

With that said, we really did read such wonderful books this past year! Examples are: "People of the Book" by Geraldine Brooks, "Lucy by the Sea" by Elizabeth Strout, "Lessons in Chemistry", "Big Girl" by Mecca Jamilah Sullivan, and started this new year with "Search" by Michelle Huneven — which was a novel very relatable for many St. John's folks!

Our January meeting was via Zoom, but we will make future decisions of meeting in person as the weather permits. Please take note of the Book Group notice in Happenings leading up to our next get together, which will be February 27th at 7:00 pm. We have chosen "By Her Own Design: A Novel of Ann Lowe." This is an historical fiction novel by Piper Huguley. Do come and join us ± we would love to see new faces!

Respectfully submitted,

Paula DiMauro

CENTRE STREET FOOD PANTRY

"I [help] because I can, 'cause it is the responsibility of those who can and who have to help those who don't. It's the basics of being a person" – Volunteer, CSFP

Since the pandemic the Centre Street Food Pantry (CSFP) has grown four-fold both in the number of clients served and the amount of food provided. **Each month** the Pantry provides 65,000 pounds of food including fresh produce, eggs and dairy, meat, dry goods, and personal care items.

CSFP gets some free food through the Greater Boston Food Bank. The Pantry buys frozen protein through GBFB and 50% of the dairy and produce from local businesses. In addition CSFP is always improving its infrastructure to keep clients and volunteers informed and food and volunteers safe from the weather.

Throughout the year when St. John's shares a service with another parish, the open plate offering is often donated to CSFP. In 2023, \$1,698 was donated compared to \$566 in 2022. Also this year we started a monthly food drive. Each month one food type was designated, donated by parishioners, and delivered to the pantry for the Kids Club Bags. Thank you to all who donated food, money, and other types of support.

For more information about donating or volunteering, check out the new CSFP website and watch the video: <https://www.centrestfoodpantry.org/what-we-do>. To stay up to date with the pantry's latest doings, monthly newsletters are posted on the St. John's bulletin board.

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Snow

MANNA MINISTRY

In 2023, St. John's parishioners participated in the Cathedral Monday lunch service on four 5th Mondays. Between four and six of us made the trip from Newton to Boston on our designated Mondays, and others joined us downtown. We helped serve the meal and then handed out desserts that we provide — brownies, cookies, cupcakes and other snacks, in individually wrapped portions.

St. John's is one of five parishes supporting this ministry, which serves people who are homeless and in need of food in the Boston area. The other parishes, assigned to each of the other four Mondays in a month, supply both the meal as well as the desserts. Because St. John's is the smallest parish of the group, we have been partnered with a family that provides the main course (usually chicken a la king, with rice) for our 5th Mondays.

Looking ahead, for those who wish to mark their calendars, there are five 5th Mondays in 2024: January 29 (that's next week!), April 29, July 29, September 30, and December 30. I'd also like to explore other ways for us to support the MANNA community as part of St. John's outreach commitment.

Thank you to all who have participated in the past year, whether by supplying desserts or serving in person. And welcome to anyone interested in exploring this activity in 2024!

Faithfully submitted,
Libby Seaman

WORSHIP

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC REPORT

This year brought some new opportunities for our choir. First of all, we maintained an in-person presence for an entire year, something we hadn't been able to do for quite some time. We sang a Service of Advent Lessons and Carols with Grace Church, Newton Corner, which was a first-time collaboration, and one we hope may continue. For the first time in most of our memories, we had the honor of singing for an ordination, when Michael Thompson was made a priest. And we had a brass player for the first time in many years.

What makes this all work, from my standpoint, is the dedication of our choir members and other lay and clergy leaders who are encouraging and collaborative. The choir's continued willingness to learn new and sometimes difficult or unfamiliar music is commendable. For instance, we sang a calypso carol on Christmas Eve, two pieces by contemporary composer Kathryn Rose, and pivoted several times between Morning Prayer canticles and Eucharistic service music, during the first nine months of the year when we did not have a regular clergy presence on Sundays. So I tip my hat to Laura Brewer, Marina Matuzek, Mike McKay, Cleo Messinger, and Cole Stanton, as well as to our Wardens, Vestry, and Priest-in Charge. You all make the music ministry such a joy to lead week by week.

A plea: Please consider joining the choir for a month, a holiday season, or in another way (first Sunday of each month, just for Lent, etc.). I know there are singers out in the congregation, and it would be great to have you join us even on a part-time basis.

I've continued to highlight at least one woman's music and/or hymn text each week. I hope to add mention of musicians and poets of color as we move forward, as I believe these talents have often been neglected or ignored in many mainline (white) churches.

There is one piece of news for 2024: I hope to engage a local organ technician and builder to perform some overdue repair and maintenance on the organ. The pedal board needs to be replaced, the console moved forward by a few inches, and the entire pipe chest needs to be cleaned for the first time in the over 50 years since the instrument was installed in the late 1960s! Details have not been finalized, but we will likely have a few weeks without the use of the organ, as I anticipate the work will take well over one week. Again, our choir is ready to lead worship either *a cappella* or with the assistance of an instrumentalist or a piano. Stay tuned.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeffrey Mills

THE ALTAR GUILD

December 2023 may have been the busiest month in the history of St. John's Altar Guild with all of the events and changes of hangings, but it was a pleasure making our sanctuary look its best. And what a treat it was to prepare St John's for a priestly ordination!

In 2024 we look forward to working with Rev. Michael and learning about his ideas for liturgy. We've already experienced a touch of incense, which I know is new to many in the congregation. We will see what other changes are to come.

There are a number of Sundays throughout the year that are available for donated flower arrangements. If you would like to remember a loved one, or commemorate a special event, or simply make a contribution to the beauty of our sanctuary, please speak to me. If you would like to donate towards the potted orchids, that would also be appreciated.

Faithfully,
Kristin Knudson
St. John's Altar Guild

THE EIGHT O'CLOCK SERVICE

The St. John's eight o'clock community faced challenges in the Transition year of 2023, just like our fellow-ministers at the 10 am service. We did not have some of the usual "draws," which in ordinary years help to attract worshippers bright and early on Sunday mornings: we did not have the ecclesiastical panache of a priest; we did not have the liturgical punch of a Eucharist service. Perhaps this accounts for the dwindling attendance at the 8 am service in 2023, or perhaps the lower numbers were simply due to a longer-term cycle. Average attendance at the early service has waxed and waned at St. John's over the past decade, and likely will fluctuate in the future, too. In 2023 we persevered regardless — what we did have as a draw was our constancy. An 8 am service of Morning Prayer was held at St. John's a remarkable 46 out of 53 Sundays in 2023. The only Sundays we took off were four weeks in August (single service at 9 am), Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday (always good for the whole parish to be together), and Homecoming Sunday (when we joyfully joined the ten o'clockers to welcome our new Deacon).

But the eight o'clock community did more in 2023 than merely persist. For the first time in recent years, we continued the 8 am service through the month of July. St. John's commuted to Trinity Newton Centre for 10 am services that month, but the 8 am service was held faithfully at St. John's to ensure an early option for those who needed it. We also experimented with multiple formats for the 8 am homily: standard sermon, book excerpts, guided meditation, and even silent contemplation one week. The 8 am service was blessed many weeks by hearing the good word of a member of the St. John's Sermon Group: Jeff Barrell, Betsy Blagdon, Laura Brewer, Brian Goeselt, and Jeffrey Mills. We rejoiced to share in their gifts, on loan from the 10 am service.

The eight o'clock community plays a vital role at St. John's. We open the church on Sunday mornings (with stalwart assistance from Music Director Jeffrey Mills), start the coffee, and in the winter, we make the all-important first assessment of whether the heating system is still running (no sure thing!). We provide an additional opportunity for worship to those who cannot make it to the 10 am service, and to those who simply need a place to go early on Sunday morning. This responsibility we discharge faithfully, and every year our constancy bears fruit. On the fourth Sunday of Advent this year — a day we might reasonably have taken off, since there was Christmas Eve service to draw us to church later that day — a visitor from a parish on Martha's Vineyard showed up at St. John's at 8 am and was welcomed in for spiritual nurture and post-service fellowship. God willing, the eight o'clock community will be in the choir stalls as many Sundays as possible again in 2024 — we invite you to come and see.

Faithfully submitted,
Rhys Bowen

USHERS' REPORT

The ushers at St. John's play an important and often behind the scenes role during the worship service. They are the first person most people encounter upon entering church. They welcome and greet existing and new worshippers. The opportunity to greet friends and help new parishioners feel welcome is why ushers are called to this ministry.

In addition to creating a welcoming first impression, an usher performs many other duties. The usher puts up flags outside the church, hands out leaflets, and assists people to pews as needed. They ask people to bring the elements forward if they are on the table in the back of the church. An usher counts the number of people in church and posts it on the board in the back of the church so the priest knows how much bread and wine will be needed. They collect the offering and bring it forward to the acolyte. The usher helps to manage flow of the congregation during communion. They fill out the attendance slip at the end of the service and give it to the priest. At the end of the service, they neaten up the pews, making sure all leaflets are removed from pews and books are placed back in their racks. Finally, the usher takes down and folds the flags.

St. John's is blessed to have an enthusiastic group of ushers including Jeff Barrell, Alastair Battson, Betsy Blagdon, Rhys Bowen, Nancy Bowler, Brian Goeselt, Alec Schoeck, Becky Snow, and Tom Wood. If you feel called to this important ministry, please contact one of the ushers. For new ushers we can schedule you with a seasoned pro who can help provide training and support.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Wood

APPENDIX

St. John's Church, Newtonville

Actuals and Some Budgets

2020-2023

	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Budget	2023 Provisional	2024 Budget
Revenue						
40000 Regular Support (3)						
40100 Pledges	84,748.25	99,025.96	101,775.84	90,000.00	83,501.88	88,000.00
40200 Christmas & Easter	1,640.00	900.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	830.00	1,000.00
40300 Prior Year Pledges	0.00	500.00	2,160.00	400.00		0.00
40400 Open Plate	293.25	575.00	873.00	900.00	1,896.00	1,000.00
40500 Christmas & Easter Flowers	229.00	530.00	410.00	500.00	580.00	500.00
40600 Service Flower Donations	200.00	100.00	100.00	100.00		0.00
Total 40000 Regular Support (3)	\$ 87,110.50	\$ 101,630.96	\$ 106,318.84	\$ 92,900.00	\$ 86,807.88	\$ 90,500.00
41000 Fund Withdrawals (4)						
41100 Investment Income						
41110 Schwab Investment Inc	28,298.00	34,544.00	38,720.00	35,000.00	17,500.00	35,000.00
41120 DIT Income	1,752.92	1,595.65	1,448.75	1,500.00	1,030.14	1,000.00
41130 Carlton Atwood Trust Inc	4,000.00	4,000.00	6,000.00	4,000.00	6,907.00	4,000.00
41140 Other Funds						
41150 Investment Draw Surplus	0.00	-30,000.00	-40,000.00		-25,000.00	
Total 41100 Investment Income	\$ 34,050.92	\$ 10,139.65	\$ 6,168.75	\$ 40,500.00	\$ 437.14	\$ 40,000.00
Total 41000 Fund Withdrawals (4)	\$ 34,050.92	\$ 10,139.65	\$ 6,168.75	\$ 40,500.00	\$ 437.14	\$ 40,000.00
42000 Space Use / Rentals (5)						
42100 Bowen Nursery School Rent	37,323.00	37,621.40	38,373.40	39,140.80	39,140.80	39,923.80
42200 Bowen School Reimburse	1,962.50	10,387.50	10,225.00	10,550.00	9,937.50	10,000.00
42300 Regular Renters	2,556.00	1,896.00	17,413.00	15,000.00	23,740.00	18,000.00
42400 One-time Rentals	625.00	130.00	50.00	100.00		0.00
Total 42000 Space Use / Rentals (5)	\$ 42,466.50	\$ 50,034.90	\$ 66,061.40	\$ 64,790.80	\$ 72,818.30	\$ 67,923.80
43000 Fundraising (5)	0.00	0.00	0.00			
43100 Tag Sale	0.00	0.00	0.00			
43200 Other Fundraising Activities	0.00	0.00	0.00			
Total 43000 Fundraising (5)	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00

[illegible]

50235 Building Staff Pension	0.00	0.00	877.50	1,200.00	926.25	0.00
50240 Other Building Staff (1099s)	0.00	0.00	0.00			
Total 50200 Building Staff	\$ 30,221.74	\$ 22,594.98	\$ 12,294.70	\$ 15,301.62	\$ 15,467.67	\$ 15,268.49
50300 Music Staff	0.00	0.00	0.00			
50310 Music Staff - Salary	16,900.87	17,314.78	18,124.35	18,290.74	18,402.77	19,322.91
50320 Music Staff - Withholding Taxes	5,522.84	5,557.43	5,705.19	5,757.70	5,599.79	5,879.78
50330 Music Staff - Payroll Taxes	1,795.29	1,772.87	1,835.01	1,847.82	1,836.15	1,927.96
50340 Other Music Staff (1099s)	3,200.00	800.00	550.00	1,700.00	300.00	1,000.00
Total 50300 Music Staff	\$ 27,419.00	\$ 25,445.08	\$ 26,214.55	\$ 27,596.26	\$ 26,138.71	\$ 28,130.65
50500 Payroll Fees	687.15	721.16	489.72	500.00	338.50	500.00
Total 50000 Payroll	\$ 84,972.77	\$ 76,569.29	\$ 72,930.08	\$ 97,717.71	\$ 59,547.44	\$ 91,616.43
51000 Worship and Music						
51100 Worship supplies	741.44	510.47	1,145.39	1,200.00	1,391.64	1,500.00
51200 Music supplies	119.00	119.00	408.77	500.00	427.39	500.00
51310 Christmas and Easter flowers	651.70	852.05	699.50	800.00	1,131.80	1,200.00
51320 Special service flowers	0.00	158.58	441.95	500.00	292.93	400.00
51330 Other flowers	60.00	0.00	0.00			
51340 Instrument Maintenance	0.00	0.00	130.00	1,000.00		500.00
Total 51000 Worship and Music	\$ 1,572.14	\$ 1,640.10	\$ 2,825.61	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 3,243.76	\$ 4,100.00
52000 Christian Formation	0.00	0.00	0.00			
52100 Church School	0.00	0.00	0.00	250.00		250.00
52200 Child Care	1,508.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	136.00	500.00
52300 Adult Formation	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	79.65	250.00
Total 52000 Christian Formation	\$ 1,508.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,350.00	\$ 215.65	\$ 1,000.00
53000 Office and Administration	0.00	0.00	0.00			
50160 Clergy - Expense Allowance	1,404.00	1,404.00	936.00	1,200.00		200.00
53100 Office Supplies	3,086.10	1,798.81	1,850.32	2,000.00	2,794.90	2,000.00
53200 Postage	165.00	55.00	66.95	100.00		100.00
53300 Pledge Software Fees	384.00	396.00	528.00	684.00	684.00	720.00
53400 Pledge Transaction Fees	726.52	730.14	1,009.85	1,000.00	642.96	1,000.00
53500 Bank Fees	36.00	35.00	17.00		0.00	
53600 Interest Charge on Debt	106.81	0.00	0.00			
Total 53000 Office and Administration	\$ 5,908.43	\$ 4,418.95	\$ 4,408.12	\$ 4,984.00	\$ 4,121.86	\$ 4,020.00
54000 Building and Grounds						

54100 Utilities									
54110 Electric	2,614.77	2,704.76	3,398.98	5,600.00	3,354.68	4,000.00			
54120 Gas	11,824.81	10,473.54	14,871.77	19,500.00	14,132.93	15,000.00			
54130 Water	2,955.71	1,982.04	1,912.14	2,000.00	2,550.43	3,000.00			
54140 Internet	0.00	0.00	0.00						
54150 Telephone	104.02	79.56	82.62	90.00	85.74	90.00			
54199 Space Use Allocation - Util									
Total 54100 Utilities	\$ 17,499.31	\$ 15,239.90	\$ 20,265.51	\$ 27,190.00	\$ 20,123.78	\$ 22,090.00			
54200 Building	0.00	0.00	0.00						
54210 Cleaning Services	16,481.00	22,631.00	20,601.00	21,000.00	21,650.00	22,000.00			
54220 Garbage Pickup	2,805.34	2,821.91	3,246.27	3,200.00	3,543.79	3,600.00			
54230 Lawn Maintenance	4,862.50	4,485.00	4,935.00	5,000.00	5,331.00	5,500.00			
54240 Snow Removal	1,200.00	1,587.07	1,600.00	2,000.00	750.00	1,800.00			
54250 Maintenance & Supplies	950.00	1,586.96	1,200.99	1,500.00	3,406.85	3,000.00			
54260 Repairs & Improvements	805.66	159.00	1,245.00	4,000.00	4,571.61	4,500.00			
54299 Space Use Allocation - Bldg									
Total 54200 Building	\$ 27,104.50	\$ 33,270.94	\$ 32,828.26	\$ 36,700.00	\$ 39,253.25	\$ 40,400.00			
Total 54000 Building and Grounds	\$ 44,603.81	\$ 48,510.84	\$ 53,093.77	\$ 63,890.00	\$ 59,377.03	\$ 62,490.00			
55000 In-reach Activities									
55100 Parish Gatherings	0.00	0.00	319.92	1,000.00	2,223.83	1,000.00			
55200 Welcome Committee supplies	0.00	0.00	0.00	375.00		375.00			
55300 Vestry Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,500.00		1,500.00			
Total 55000 In-reach Activities	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 319.92	\$ 2,875.00	\$ 2,223.83	\$ 2,875.00			
56000 Insurance	0.00	0.00	0.00						
56100 Church Insurance	8,395.16	8,674.45	8,830.34	9,100.00	10,677.92	11,000.00			
56200 Worker's Compensation Ins	260.00	297.00	233.00	300.00	312.00	350.00			
56999 Space Use Allocation - Ins			0.00						
Total 56000 Insurance	\$ 8,655.16	\$ 8,971.45	\$ 9,063.34	\$ 9,400.00	\$ 10,989.92	\$ 11,350.00			
59000 Non-Line 14 Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00						
59010 Space Use Exp - Bowen (- 5)									
59020 Space Use Exp - Others (- 5)									
59100 Fundraiser Expenses (- 5)	0.00	0.00	0.00						
59200 Assessment (12)	18,111.00	14,070.00	12,033.00	11,460.00	11,460.00	12,085.00			
59300 Gifts Outside the Parish (13)	0.00	0.00	0.00						

59410 Capex paid from Op Funds (15)	17,263.24	17,878.36	2,184.00	0.00	
59420 Parish Outreach from Ops (13)	0.00	0.00	250.00	500.00	2,000.00
59430 Rector's Discretionary from Ops (13)	0.00	1,000.00	500.00	1,000.00	500.00
Total 59000 Non-Line 14 Expenses	\$ 35,374.24	\$ 32,948.36	\$ 14,967.00	\$ 12,960.00	\$ 14,585.00
Total Operating Expenditures	\$ 182,594.55	\$ 173,058.99	\$ 157,607.84	\$ 197,176.71	\$ 192,036.43
Net Operating Revenue	-\$ 6,696.38	\$ 3,648.52	\$ 36,601.07	\$ 3,614.09	\$ 9,787.37
Other Revenue					
60000 Fund Receipts	0.00	0.00	0.00		
60100 Gifts for Capital Expenses (8)	2,732.73	2,488.26	16,073.38	3,000.00	1,225.00
60200 Altar Guild Fund/Flowers Gifts	0.00	0.00	0.00		
60300 Centre Street Food Pantry Gifts (11)	525.00	428.00	566.00	550.00	1,000.00
60400 Rector's Discretionary Fund (11)	275.00	375.00	850.00		903.00
60500 Other Pass-thru Gifts (11)	0.00	0.00	200.00		246.00
60600 Next Year Pledges Rcvd (NR)	12,400.00	13,132.82	12,810.32	13,000.00	10,000.00
60700 Additions to Endowment (9)	0.00	0.00	0.00		5,000.01
Total 60000 Fund Receipts	\$ 15,932.73	\$ 16,424.08	\$ 30,499.70	\$ 16,550.00	\$ 18,872.01
Total 60000 Fund Receipts	\$ 15,932.73	\$ 16,424.08	\$ 30,499.70	\$ 16,550.00	\$ 18,872.01
Other Expenditures					
70000 Fund Disbursements					
70100 Capital Fund Other Exp (15)	0.00	0.00	14,802.00	7,000.00	15,000.00
70200 Altar Guild Fund (Flowers) Exp	0.00	0.00	0.00		
70300 Centre Street Food Pantry Exp (18)	525.00	428.00	566.00	550.00	1,000.00
70400 Rector's Discretionary Fund (18)	250.00	375.00	850.00		
70500 Other Pass-thru Gifts (18)	0.00	0.00	200.00		246.00
70600 Next Year Pledges (NR)	0.00	12,400.00	13,132.82	13,870.64	9,800.00
Total 70000 Fund Disbursements	\$ 775.00	\$ 13,203.00	\$ 29,550.82	\$ 21,420.64	\$ 32,551.94
Total 70000 Fund Disbursements	\$ 775.00	\$ 13,203.00	\$ 29,550.82	\$ 21,420.64	\$ 32,551.94
Total Other Expenditures	\$ 15,157.73	\$ 3,221.08	\$ 948.88	\$ 4,870.64	\$ 13,679.93
Net Other Revenue					

Saint John's Church, Newtonville

Statement of Financial Position Comparison

As of December 31, 2023

	Total	
	As of 12/31/23	As of 12/31/22
		Change
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Bank Accounts		
10000 Checking Accounts		0.00
10100 Operating Account (1231)	69,546.05	123,896.50
10110 Operating Reserve (Schwab 8852)	122,860.50	122,860.50
10200 Capital Acct (Scholarship 1208)	0.00	4,484.38
10300 Rector's Discretionary (4765)	2,552.13	1,649.13
10500 Gift & Thrift (Rockland) (4714)	212.39	212.39
Total 10000 Checking Accounts	\$ 195,171.07	\$ 130,242.40
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 195,171.07	\$ 130,242.40
Other Current Assets		
Total Other Current Assets	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Total Current Assets	\$ 195,171.07	\$ 130,242.40
Fixed Assets		
16000 Real Estate		0.00
16100 Building (as assessed)	2,162,400.00	2,069,300.00
Total 16000 Real Estate	\$ 2,162,400.00	\$ 2,069,300.00
Total Fixed Assets	\$ 2,162,400.00	\$ 2,069,300.00
Other Assets		
15000 Investment Accounts		0.00
15100 Charles Schwab (8852) (deleted)	0.00	29,752.46
15200 Charles Schwab (9615)	902,850.70	848,803.30
15300 Diocesan Inv Trust (3130)	51,936.79	49,845.39
Total 15000 Investment Accounts	\$ 954,787.49	\$ 928,401.15
Total Other Assets	\$ 954,787.49	\$ 928,401.15
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 3,312,358.56	\$ 3,127,943.55
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
Liabilities		
		184,415.01

Total Liabilities	\$	0.00	\$	0.00	\$	0.00
Equity						
30000 Permanently Restricted Funds						0.00
Total 30000 Permanently Restricted Funds	\$	0.00	\$	0.00	\$	0.00
31000 Temporarily Restricted RE						0.00
31100 Real Estate Equity		2,162,400.00		2,069,300.00		93,100.00
Total 31000 Temporarily Restricted RE	\$	2,162,400.00	\$	2,069,300.00	\$	93,100.00
32000 Temporarily Restricted Funds		0.00		0.00		0.00
32100 Access		5,094.14		4,581.87		512.27
32200 Altar Guild Fund (Flowers)		3,374.04		3,034.74		339.30
32300 Choir & Music		2,183.20		1,963.65		219.55
32400 Memorial Account		6,185.76		5,563.71		622.05
32500 Mission Outreach		2,613.25		2,350.45		262.80
32600 Capital (Scholarship)		8,917.37		7,692.37		1,225.00
32700 Flowers		14,442.11		13,656.50		785.61
32900 Rector's Discretionary Fund		2,552.13		1,649.13		903.00
Total 32000 Temporarily Restricted Funds	\$	45,362.00	\$	40,492.42	\$	4,869.58
33000 Designated / Unrestricted Funds		0.00		0.00		0.00
33100 Investment Cash		92,232.38		70,000.00		22,232.38
33110 Rectory Fund		64,483.00		60,975.32		3,507.68
33120 Dorothy Lythgoe Fund		81,670.75		77,228.12		4,442.63
33130 Emily Burdon Fund		106,964.20		101,145.68		5,818.52
33140 Avery Fund		15,089.42		14,268.59		820.83
33150 Hicks Fund		5,313.32		5,024.29		289.03
33160 Kay Shreeve Endowment		565,779.79		535,003.09		30,776.70
33170 Income Fund		43,266.08		40,912.55		2,353.53
33200 Endowment Fund		53,335.88		50,434.57		2,901.31
33310 Emergency		11,676.87		10,502.63		1,174.24
33320 Cash Reserve		1,951.67		1,755.40		196.27
33400 Interfund Loan Payable		0.00		0.00		0.00
33500 Operating Fund		62,833.20		50,900.89		11,932.31
Total 33000 Designated / Unrestricted Funds	\$	1,104,596.56	\$	1,018,151.13	\$	86,445.43
Total Equity	\$	3,312,358.56	\$	3,127,943.55	\$	184,415.01
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$	3,312,358.56	\$	3,127,943.55	\$	184,415.01



City of Newton, Massachusetts

Department of Planning and Development

1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

617-796-1120

Barney S. Heath

Director

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

PUBLIC HEARING MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 9, 2023

TO: City Council

FROM: Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Katie Whewell, Chief Planner for Current Planning
Cat Kemmett, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Petition #335-23**, for SPECIAL PERMIT/SITE PLAN APPROVAL to legitimize the current uses on site, to allow for proposed for-profit and non-profit educational tenants, to allow for farm-share distribution use, and to waive required parking stalls at 297 Lowell Avenue

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the City Council and the public with technical information and planning analysis conducted by the Planning Department. The Planning Department's intention is to provide a balanced review of the proposed project based on information it has at the time of the public hearing. Additional information about the project may be presented at or after the public hearing for consideration at a subsequent working session by the Land Use Committee of the City Council.



297 Lowell Avenue

Project Description

Background

The subject property consists of a 44,854 square foot lot improved with a church constructed in 1893. In addition to the religious use, the Bowen Cooperative Nursery School has been operating on the site since the 1990s. The site is unique in that there is no parking on site, the church takes a large portion of the lot and the balance is open space/lawn area.

The property is located on a corner lot in Newtonville at the intersection of Otis Street and Lowell Avenue. The surrounding neighborhood is predominately residential with a mix of single- and two-family dwellings, with the exception of the nearby Newton North High School. Abutting the project site to the west is a Single Residence 1 zoning district. The majority of the neighborhood is zoned Single Residence 2 (SR-2), with several parcels zoned Multi-Residence 1 and the school zoned for Public Use. The Newtonville commuter rail station and nearest Blue Bike docking station are each 0.5 mile away, and several local and express buses in Newtonville provide access to Boston, Needham, Waltham, and other public transit connections.

Special Permit

The petitioner seeks to legitimize the current uses on site, as well as allow for proposed uses, which require a special permit to allow for-profit and non-profit educational tenants as well as a farm-share distribution use, and to waive required parking stalls. Per sections 3.4.1, 6.3.14.B.1.b and 6.3.14.B.2, a special permit is required to allow educational uses requiring a parking waiver and for-profit educational uses in the SR-2 zoning district. This petition is before the Committee to legitimize the existing educational uses on the site and allow for future educational uses, to allow an agricultural use on less than three acres, and to further extend the nonconforming parking on site by waiving 12 additional required parking stalls.

Analysis

The Planning Department is not concerned with the proposed educational uses, agricultural use, and parking waiver of 12 stalls. This petition will legitimize the existing uses and condition of the site, while allowing flexibility for future non-profit and for-profit educational tenants.

Because the zoning ordinance does not distinguish between uses that operate at separate times on the site, the parking requirements that apply to the site do not align with the parking demand on the site. Due to the nature of the different uses on the site, scheduling allows for there to be little overlap between uses on the site at one time. The building is in proximity to a walkable village center with several amenities and transit options that visitors to the site can take advantage of. Though the site does not have any on-site parking, street parking is available, and the church has hosted its religious and nursery use on the site without on-site parking for many years. There is two-hour parking available on Otis Street and Lowell Ave along the frontage of the church. The availability of

on-street parking lends itself well to uses on site that do not require long term parking.

I. Zoning Relief Requested:

For more details around the zoning analysis please refer to **Attachment A**.

Zoning Relief Required		
<i>Ordinance</i>	<i>Required Relief</i>	<i>Action Required</i>
§4.4.1 §6.3.14.B.1.b §6.3.14.B.2	Request to allow non-profit educational uses requiring a parking waiver and for-profit educational uses	S.P. per §7.3.3
§3.4.1	Request to allow an agriculture use on less than three acres	S.P. per §7.3.3
§5.1.4 §5.1.13 §7.8.2.2	Request to further extend nonconforming parking by waiving 12 additional required parking stalls	S.P. per §7.3.3

II. Criteria for Consideration per §7.3.3. and/or §7.8.2.C.2:

- The site in SR-2 is an appropriate location for the proposed for-profit and nonprofit educational uses, agricultural use on less than three acres, and waiver of 12 parking stalls (§7.3.3.C.1)
- The requested parking waivers will not adversely affect the neighborhood (7.3.3.C.2)
- The requested parking waivers will not create a nuisance or serious hazard to vehicles or pedestrians (§7.3.3.C.3)
- Access to the site over streets is appropriate for the types and numbers of vehicles involved. (§7.3.3.C.4)
- Literal compliance with the required amount of parking is impracticable due to the nature of the use, or the location, size, width, depth, shape, or grade of the lot, or that such exceptions would be in the public interest, or in the interest of safety, or protection of environmental features (§5.1.13)

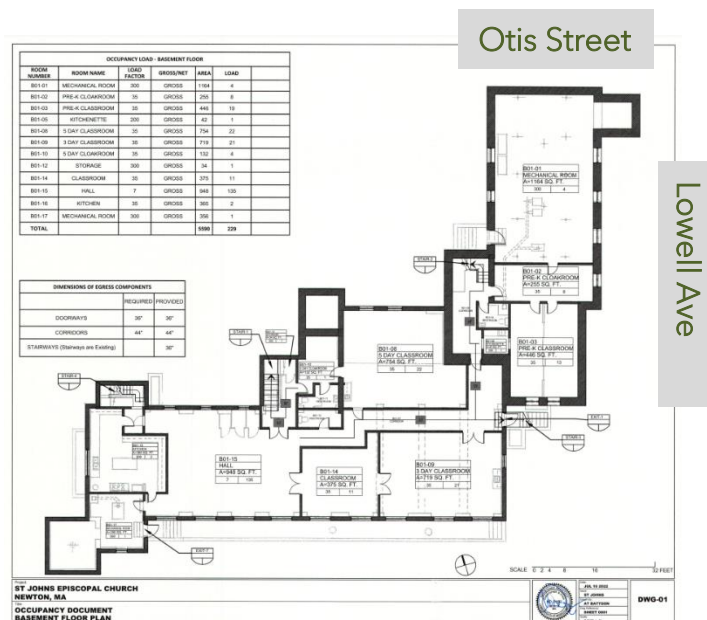
III. Project Proposal and Site Characteristics

A. Site

The subject property consists of a 44,854 square foot lot located at the corner of Lowell Ave and Otis Street. The church building was constructed circa 1893. A hedge

runs along the corner where the two streets meet, and there are entrances to the building on each frontage. Several trees are located along the perimeter of the site. The grade of the site generally slopes from a low along Lowell Avenue to a high at the rear of the site along Otis Street. No parking exists on the property, making the parking facilities legally nonconforming.

Existing Conditions



IV. Project Description and Analysis

A. Land Use

If approved the use of the site will expand from religious use and nursery use to preschool use, for profit and nonprofit education use, and agricultural use.

B. Site Design

The petitioner seeks to legitimize the existing uses on the site and allow for future for-profit and non-profit educational uses. The petitioner is currently leasing space to several non-profit and for-profit educational uses and seeks to generally allow educational uses without specifying tenants at this time to allow for greater flexibility when leasing. A special permit is required to allow non-profit educational uses requiring a parking waiver and for-profit educational uses in the SR-2 zoning district. No new structures or parking are proposed in this petition.

Listed below are the current uses of the building:

- St. John's Episcopal Church
 - i. Weekly services on Sundays
 - ii. Prayer groups and choir practices one evening per week
- Bowen Cooperative Nursery School
 - i. Hours 8:45am – 1pm during weekdays, and follows the Newton School calendar
- Newton Theater Company
 - i. Monday-Friday, following the Newton Schools calendar, 4pm – 5:30pm
- Meditation classes
 - i. Meetings every Wednesday evening 6:45pm - 10pm
- Support group
 - i. Sundays 5pm – 6pm
- Creation Station summer camps
 - i. Spring and summer breaks from 9am – 2pm
- Creative Connections Pediatrics
 - i. Tuesday from 3:30 – 5:30pm
- Red Fire Farms community farm co-op
 - i. Farm uses outdoor space on the site for their weekly crop share distribution
 - ii. No active farming conducted on subject site
 - iii. Thursdays, 4pm – 7pm during the summer and early fall
- Daisy Scouts
 - i. Meets concurrently with 10am church services on Sundays approximately 2 times per month during the school year

Parking requirements

Existing Uses		Parking	Total
St. John's Church	234 seats	1 per 3 seats	79 stalls
	6 employees	1 per 3 employees	
Bowen Nursery School*	8 employees	1 per each employee	8 stalls
Newton Theatre Co	4 employees	1 per each employee	4 stalls
Living Vow Zen	1 employee	1 per each employee	1 stall
Creation Station*	3 employees	1 per each employee	3 stalls
Creative Connections	1 employee	1 per each employee	1 stall
Daisy Scouts	2 employees	1 per each employee	2 stalls
Red Fire Farms	2 employees	1 per 4 employees	1 stall
TOTAL			99 STALLS

When determining the parking requirement for a site, the zoning ordinance does not consider the scheduling of uses but rather calculates the requirement as if all uses on site occur concurrently. Based on the narrative and schedule provided by the petitioner, it appears that while there are currently up to six other organizations using the meeting halls, classrooms, and outdoor space, there are very few instances where multiple uses overlap at the same time. Generally, there is only one use at the property at a time.

The petitioner also seeks to allow flexibility to allow future non-profit educational uses in underutilized or vacant space in the building. Based on the existing educational uses already operating, the Planning Department is not concerned with the proposed nonprofit and for-profit educational uses. Allowing these uses that are complementary to the primary use of the space and do not conflict with existing traffic patterns can help remove a common barrier small businesses and institutions face when trying to establish a business in Newton.

C. Parking and Circulation

The parking requirement for the religious use and nursery use, which predate zoning requirements, is 87 stalls. Because the property has no on-site parking, the required parking for the site is legally nonconforming. To legitimize the other uses on the site, a parking waiver of 12 parking stalls is required as no additional parking is proposed to accommodate these new uses.

Peak parking demand for the site is during Sunday services, when approximately 20 cars come to the site. According to the petitioner, the on-street parking along the frontage on Otis Street and Lowell Avenue is typically sufficient to meet this demand. As an alternative to driving, public transit options are available nearby in Newtonville.

Should this petition be approved, the Planning Department encourages the petitioner to stagger the schedules for future educational uses to minimize potential parking conflicts and overlapping pick up and drop off times.

V. Interdepartmental Review:

No interdepartmental review is required at this time.

VI. PETITIONER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The petition is considered complete.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Zoning Review Memorandum
Attachment C: DRAFT Council Order



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Attachment A
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www.newtonma.gov

Barney S. Heath
Director

ZONING REVIEW MEMORANDUM

Date: October 12, 2023

To: Anthony Ciccariello, Commissioner of Inspectional Services

From: Jane Santosuosso, Chief Zoning Code Official
Katie Whewell, Chief Planner for Current Planning

Cc: Tim Strayer, Agent
Saint John's Episcopal Church
Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Jonah Temple, Deputy City Solicitor

RE: **Request to allow for-profit educational use, non-profit educational use requiring a parking waiver, agricultural use and to waive 12 parking stalls**

Applicant: Saint John's Episcopal Church	
Site: 297 Lowell Avenue	SBL: 24014 0001
Zoning: SR2	Lot Area: 44,854 square feet
Current use: Religious use and nursery school	Proposed use: Religious use, preschool and for- and non-profit education

BACKGROUND:

The property at 297 Lowell Avenue consists of a 44,854 square foot lot in the SR2 zone improved with a church constructed in 1893. In addition to the religious use, the Bowen Cooperative Nursery School has been operating on site since the 1990s. The petitioner seeks to legitimize the current uses on site, as well as allow for proposed, which require a special permit to allow for-profit and non-profit educational tenants as well as a farm-share distribution use, and to waive required parking stalls.

The following review is based on plans and materials submitted to date as noted below.

- Zoning Review Application, prepared by Tim Strayer, agent, dated 9/10/2023
- Occupancy Floor plans, signed and stamped by Christopher M Dynia, architect, dated 7/10/2022

ADMINISTRATIVE DETERMINATIONS:

1. The Church seeks to allow for the flexibility for-profit and non-profit educational uses within existing underutilized spaces within the building. The petitioner is currently leasing space to several non-profit and for-profit educational uses. Additionally, the Church seeks to generally allow educational uses without specifying tenants at this time. Per sections 3.4.1, 6.3.14.B.1.b and 6.3.14.B.2, a special permit is required to allow non-profit educational uses requiring a parking waiver and for-profit educational uses in the SR2 zoning district.
2. Red Fire Farms uses outdoor space on the Church grounds for their weekly CSA distribution for three hours one day per week seasonally. Per section 3.4.1, a special permit is required for an agricultural use on less than five acres in the SR2 district.
3. The Church holds services on Sunday mornings as well as prayer groups and choir practices one evening per week. The Bowen Nursery School operates on the Newton Public School schedule (school year only, with no summer hours). Creation Station camps operate in the Bowen spaces during school vacations with no overlap with Bowen. Several other organizations rent space within the building. A review of the weekly scheduling of uses indicates that while there are currently six other organizations using the Church's meeting halls and classrooms, there are very few instances where uses overlap. As such, generally there is only one use at the property at a time.

When determining the parking requirement for a particular property, the Ordinance does not consider the scheduling of uses but rather calculates the requirement as if all uses on site occur concurrently. Per the chart below, the Church and nursery school have a combined existing nonconforming parking requirement of 87 stalls. The additional uses result in a combined requirement of 12 stalls. As no parking exists on the property, a waiver of 12 stalls is required to further extend the nonconforming parking to accommodate the proposed uses per sections 5.1.13 and 7.8.2.C.2. Below is a table of the existing uses and their parking requirements.

Existing Uses		Parking	Total
St. John's Church	234 seats 6 employees	1 per 3 seats 1 per 3 employees	79 stalls
Bowen Nursery School*	8 employees	1 per each employee	8 stalls
Newton Theatre Co	4 employees	1 per each employee	4 stalls
Living Vow Zen	1 employee	1 per each employee	1 stall
Creation Station*	3 employees	1 per each employee	3 stalls
Creative Connections	1 employee	1 per each employee	1 stall
Daisy Scouts	2 employees	1 per each employee	2 stalls
Red Fire Farms	2 employees	1 per 4 employees	1 stall
TOTAL			99 STALLS

*Bowen Nursery School operates on the Newton Public Schools calendar. Creation Station operates only during school vacations

Zoning Relief Required		
<i>Ordinance</i>	<i>Required Relief</i>	<i>Action Required</i>
§4.4.1 §6.3.14.B.1.b §6.3.14.B.2	Request to allow non-profit educational uses requiring a parking waiver and for-profit educational uses	S.P. per §7.3.3
§3.4.1	Request to allow an agriculture use on less than three acres	S.P. per §7.3.3
§5.1.4 §5.1.13 §7.8.2.2	Request to further extend nonconforming parking by waiving 12 additional required parking stalls	S.P. per §7.3.3

CITY OF NEWTON

IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDERED:

That the City Council, finding that the public convenience and welfare will be substantially served by its action, that the use of the site will be in harmony with the conditions, safeguards and limitations set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, and that said action will be without substantial detriment to the public good, and without substantially derogating from the intent or purpose of the Zoning Ordinance, grants approval of the following SPECIAL PERMIT/SITE PLAN APPROVAL to allow non-profit educational uses requiring a parking waiver, to allow for-profit educational uses, to allow an agricultural use on less than three acres, and to further extend the nonconforming parking on site by waiving 12 parking stalls as recommended by the Land Use Committee for the reasons given by the Committee, through its Chairman, Councilor Richard Lipof:

1. The site is an appropriate location for the proposed educational uses, agricultural use, and 12-stall parking waiver because the site has historically accommodated a mix of complementary uses without on-site parking. The uses proposed mostly operate out of the site at different times, thus resulting in a lesser parking demand than the Ordinance requires. (§7.8.2.C.1)
2. The proposed educational uses, agricultural use, and parking waiver will not adversely affect the neighborhood because peak traffic demand will not be negatively affected. (7.3.3.C.2)
3. There will not be a nuisance to vehicles or pedestrians because the existing conditions of the site will be maintained. (§7.3.3.C.3)
4. Access to the site over streets is appropriate for the types and numbers of vehicles involved. (§7.3.3.C.4)
5. A waiver of 12 parking stalls is in the public interest because constructing additional parking stalls would require an increase in impervious paving on the site and street parking is available. (§5.1.13)

PETITION NUMBER: #335-23

PETITIONER: Saint John's Episcopal Church

LOCATION: 297 Lowell Avenue, Ward 2, Newtonville, on land known as Section 24 Block 14 Lot 01, containing approximately 44,854 sq. ft. of land

OWNER: St. John's Episcopal Church

ADDRESS OF OWNER: 297 Lowell Avenue
Newton, MA 02460

TO BE USED FOR: To allow for-profit educational use, non-profit educational use requiring parking waivers, an agricultural use on less than three acres, and a waiver of 12 parking stalls.

RELIEF GRANTED: Special Permit per §7.3.3:

- To waive 12 parking stalls (§5.1.4, §5.1.13)
- To allow non-profit educational uses requiring a parking waiver and for-profit educational uses (§4.4.1, §6.3.14.B.1.b, §6.3.14.B.2)
- To allow an agriculture use on less than three acres (§3.4.1)

ZONING: Single Residence 2

Approved, subject to the following conditions:

1. All buildings, parking areas, driveways, walkways, landscaping and other site features associated with this special permit/site plan approval shall be located and constructed consistent with:
 - a. A set of floor plans signed and stamped by Christopher M Dynia, Registered Architect, dated July 10, 2022
2. No building permit (other than a demolition permit) or certificate of occupancy and unless otherwise specified shall be issued by the City pursuant to this Special Permit/Site Plan Approval unless all applicable terms and conditions have been complied with and the Petitioner has:
 - a. Recorded a certified copy of this Special Permit/Site Plan Approval at the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds and filed proof of such recording with the City Clerk and submitted a copy with the building permit application.

- b. Obtained a written statement/sign off from the Planning Department that confirms the Building Permit plans are consistent with plans approved in Condition #1 including all dimensional requirements.