

170th Annual Meeting & Report
January 28, 2024



Saint Luke's Episcopal Church
232 Wyoming Avenue
Scranton, PA 18503

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RECTOR'S REPORT
on the Occasion of the Annual Parish Meeting
The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, 28 January 2024

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is an honor to stand before you yet again this year and offer my Rector's Report. Recently I was asked by another local clergy person how long I have been at St. Luke's. While he thought it was much longer, it is surprising to think that this past November I started into my ninth year here at St. Luke's and my third, as your Rector.

We are called to be a beacon of light one to another and to our community. This past year has been very full and enriching as we as a parish have worshiped, ministered, and borne witness to the love of God in Christ here at these crossroads. Annually, I offer an overview of the work and ministry of our parish church to give a review of our common life over the past calendar year. We are a vibrant parish, and there is much happening within these walls and beyond.

Worship and Liturgy: Worship is the most important thing we do as a parish. All of our ministry and spiritual life is properly rooted in worship. In fact, the word worship comes from an old English word "worthship" – meaning that to which we give worth. Our worship life at St. Luke's is full and six days out of seven, we provide opportunities to share in prayer and liturgy.

We offer a regular schedule of the Daily Office, Saturday /Sunday and mid-week celebrations of Holy Eucharist. This year we offered all of our usual Holy Week and Easter services and during the Fridays in Lent prayed the Stations of the Cross and Compline. In June, we welcomed Bishop Kevin Nichols on Trinity Sunday at which time 12 people were confirmed/received/reaffirmed. We celebrated our full traditional schedule of Christmas services, as well as the Longest Night/Blue Christmas service at which Sheri Melcher of CaPPA served again as guest pianist. Since March of 2020 we have been live-streaming, and by and large, the majority of our services are streamed, including special liturgies, such as the aforementioned Lenten devotions, as well as pastoral offices (i.e weddings, funerals), as requested by families. Our in-person attendance has not quite returned to pre-pandemic rates, but our attendance overall is strengthening and our streaming views remain strong. We do have a number of members who join us weekly via streaming and consider themselves part of our "remote community" The obvious issue we face with streaming of course, is the administration of the sacrament to those communicants who join us virtually. I am happy to report that following the completion of diocesan training and/or renewal of Eucharistic Visitor licensing, we are resuming regular Eucharistic Visitation and in the coming weeks will return to sending the sacrament from the Sunday Eucharist to those members who are homebound or living in congregate care facilities.

This year, our Holy Hikes© ministry, which is a chapter of a California-based Episcopal organization, continued enjoying the beauty of God's creation and being in communion together

as we celebrated the Eucharist along the trail. This year, we moved from hiking in seasonal weather to offering a monthly "on the trail" Eucharist. Most recently, this ministry caught the eye of the local Heritage Trail Authority and on January 1, 2024, we collaborated to offer a First Day, First Peoples Walk. In Epiphany, we offered the opportunity for House Blessings again this year. In October, we held our Annual First Friday service of the Blessing of the Animals, and welcomed friends from St. Cats and Dogs and more. On Thanksgiving, we were not able to hold our traditional Thanksgiving Day Eucharist as I was ill with Covid. I was saddened by this as it is the day that marks my anniversary of serving here at St. Luke's.

As an ecumenical partner we participated again in the annual Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God service as part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and were part of programs offered through the Scranton Area Multifaith Ministerium. In January, it was my privilege to serve on a panel of local clergy respondents as part of The Greater Scranton MLK Commission Annual Dinner to celebrate the life, legacy, and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The theme of the event was *When Good People Remain Silent: Anti-Semitism, Othering, Belonging*.

Additionally, it was again my privilege, as your priest, to represent St. Luke's at the Scranton Pride Flag raising, as the President of the Scranton Area Multifaith Ministerium, as a Commissioner on the City of Scranton Human Relations Commission, and in the Diocese of Bethlehem. This was my sixth and final year to serve on the Diocesan Commission for Ministry. I continue to serve on the Diocesan Taskforce for Antiracism and Reconciliation. This coming June, per my election at Diocesan Convention 2022, I will serve as a clergy deputy to the 2024 General Convention of the Episcopal Church which will be held in Louisville, KY.

Each March, the Parochial Report must be submitted to the national offices of the Episcopal Church. This requires us to cull together a lot of statistics, and as I often say, these numbers give a partial picture of our parish, but they can in no way depict the tremendous life and vibrancy of this parish community. This past year, for the first time the report asked additional questions regarding parish investments and endowments and the use of those funds to cover operating expenditures. We faithfully reported those numbers, knowing that the reason those questions were being asked was because so many parishes throughout the church are, like St. Luke's, living on and operating out of the giving's of past generations. Despite this, there is a sense by many in the parish that St. Luke's is well-endowed and our coffers are full; I assure you, they are anything but. In fact, when I came to St. Luke's in 2015, it was estimated at that time that our investment funds would only last another 5-6 years. We have gone far beyond that due to wise investing and tightening our belts, and, while we have many generous pledgers and givers of record, to use an old accounting phrase, "payment due exceeds counts received." This hopefully does not come as a shock to anyone as we have been reporting this information to the parish for years. We are now at a critical juncture however, which you will hear more about from our Senior Warden and Treasurer who will provide more specifics regarding our financial picture.

As I do each year in my report I will share with you some figures which help to give a greater overview of our common life together here at St. Luke's.

General statistics: In 2023 our membership remained consistent, with some growth. We had ten new persons added to the parish roster by baptism, request, or letter of transfer. I should add that in the preparation of last year's Parochial Report, we did an extensive review of the parish roster and moved 97 people to an inactive list, thereby decreasing the parish active membership from 198 to 113. This action was necessary to assure that we had an accurate picture of our membership and those are no longer active members.

In the past few years, primarily as a result of Covid, forms of worship and in-person attendance have changed dramatically. As churches continue offering hybrid and online services, the way in which we calculate attendance also continues to evolve. Starting in 2022, the Parochial Report requested that weekly attendance be documented, in addition to the long time standard of Sunday attendance.

Our average Sunday in-person attendance for 2022 was 46; our weekly attendance average was 63. In February, I will be calculating the statistics for 2023, but I can report thus far that for 2023 the Saturday Easter Vigil Service attendance was 32 (28 in 2022), with 96 streaming views (113 in 2022), and our attendance for Easter Sunday was 77 in-person (68 in 2022) with 78 streaming views (63 in 2022); total attendance 109 in-person /174 streaming. On Christmas, we had 68 in-person and 131 streaming at 4pm; 44 in-person with 97 streaming at 11pm*, and 25 with 77 streaming on Christmas Day; total 137 in- person, 305 streaming. (*streaming estimate, video removed by FB)

Specifically, in 2023, we celebrated Eucharist 172 times (156 in 2022) – 111 Saturday/Sunday Eucharists, 61 weekday or Holy Day Eucharists. The Daily Office (Morning/Evening Prayer, Compline) was prayed 380 times: 313 times on weekdays, and 67 times on Sundays. There were 3 baptisms; 12 confirmations/receptions/reaffirmations; 1 wedding; and 7 funeral/burial services from the parish.

Faithful Departed 2023: This year we commended into the hands of our merciful Savior, Edna Jean Cudworth, The Rev. Lester Stephenson, Albert G. Kramer, Randolph Wells, Joyce Frankenfield Wells, Carol Parry, and James Irving Wimsatt IV. May these, and all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace.

Christian Education and Formation:

Christian formation is the lifelong process of growing in relationship with God, self, others, and all creation. In this process, we are transformed into the people God wants us to be. St. Luke's offers a rich variety of educational offerings for children, youth, adults, and intergenerational programs.

This past year began with an Epiphany Bible Study on Ruth and Esther, offered in conjunction with The Good Book Club 2023. As part of our learning, we had a special session with Rabbi Miriam Spitzer of Temple Israel. In February, we celebrated Black History Month by partnering with the Ritz Theatre for a double-bill of *Till* and *Hidden Figures*.

In Lent, we offered a program we called *Lenten Loaves and Lessons*. Lay leaders led us on a Lenten pilgrimage using the book, *River Through the Desert, A Lenten Journey in the Holy Land*. An additional Lectionary based Bible Study was held on Wednesdays during Lent and in March a group went to Holy Cross Monastery for a Lenten Retreat. Br. Robert Sevensky, a Scranton native, was our retreat leader guiding us through the spiritual practice of keeping a Rule of Life.

In May, a truncated version of *Episcopal 101* was offered for those who were considering affirmation or reception. On Wednesdays, we continued our newly established weekly Bible/Book Study using Mother Barbara Crafton's book *Come Here, Jesus*. The midweek Bible study is currently working its way through *The Path* which is a journey through the Bible that is excerpted from the New Revised Standard Version. The study takes us on a path of God's love from Adam's creation to John's revelation.

Special outreach and learning was also offered through a "Speed-faithing" event at the University of Scranton and the Scranton Area Multifaith Ministerium offered for a second year *People of Faith Coming Together* which provided the opportunity to learn about other faith traditions and visit houses of worship in our community.

The summer was not a time off by any means. July 9-12 we had the unique opportunity to travel to Baltimore for the *It's All About Love* - a church wide festival of worship, learning, community, and action for the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. The festival ignited and fanned the flames of mission and love and is part of the ongoing revival of The Episcopal Church. In August, in collaboration with our Cypress House ministry we sponsored "*No Way Home*" a documentary produced in partnership with the Amistad Law Project about life without parole in Pennsylvania.

In the fall, inspired by our Baltimore trip, a book study was offered on *What is Evangelism?* where we reflected on author Patricia Lyon's contagious Episcopal vision for sharing the Christian faith as a way to go deeper in our own relation with God. Additionally, St. Luke's offered a book study on *The Psychology of Christian Nationalism: Why People Are Drawn In and How to Talk Across the Divide* written by Pamela Cooper-White. This three-segment study drew people from around the area and virtually from across the state via Zoom.

As a preparation for the coming of Christ, this Advent season, we joined together to make Advent wreaths for home devotional use to mark the days of Advent and offered the *Quiet, It's Advent* Calendars to all.

In addition to these numerous educational offerings, each Thursday, our ongoing Centering Prayer group gathers for prayer, reflection, and learning. This gathering is held in-person in the Chapel and via our Zoom Chapel.

Children's Christian Education is offered at St. Luke's through our Sunday School program which is under the dedicated leadership of Rick Ammenhauser and Ken Wrazien. We use "Godly Play," a Montessori-based curriculum for our lessons and weekly teaching. Sunday School meets at 9:30 each Sunday, except on the first Sunday of the month when we have our "Family Eucharist" in which the children serve in varied ways such as ushering, reading, or as acolytes. This year, during the months of February and March the Sunday School kids focused on the spiritual principle of "generosity" and collected change in little Episcopal Relief and Development Boxes of Hope. The kids then chose three ERD Gifts of Life programs to support with the \$252 they raised. Gifts which help children and families in other countries included the purchase of two goats, mosquito nets, and educational funding for children with special needs. In December, the Sunday School prepared Christmas cards with handmade ornaments for parishioners who are shut-ins and hospital bound.

This year, we continued our 9-month Confirmation class for youth – *My Faith, My Life, A Teen's Guide to the Episcopal Church* which concluded in June with Confirmation. In July, the Episcopal Youth Event – EYE was held July 3 – 8 at the University of Maryland. The 2023's theme was *Regreso A Casa: A New Age of Faith*. This bilingual theme emphasized a kind of "homecoming." Time was spent in worship, large group presentations, small group discussions, workshops on a variety of topics, as well as time to hang-out and meet Episcopalians from around the world. Our own Harry Asvazadourian joined a contingent from DioBeth and had a wonderful and inspiring time.

In an effort to better serve our teens and youth, in the coming year, we plan to use *J2A -The Journey to Adulthood* as an educational curriculum for our youth. Journey to Adulthood is an online, downloadable youth ministry program of spiritual formation for 6th-12th grades. If you are interested in volunteering in Youth Ministry, please speak to me or a member of the Vestry.

Parish Staffing and Lay Leadership: In 2023, St. Luke's ran on minimal staffing due to our financial constraints. Our staff includes Paul Bransfield, our part-time sexton, who works for us 19 hours per week. This past year has continued to be challenging with regards to obtaining the forces needed for a quartet, but we were able to retain a core group which was supplemented by various guest singers. Our organist, Maria Zengion, and our bookkeeper, Diana Castellano have both remained in our employ part-time throughout this year.

As we no longer retain the services of a parish secretary, members of our Vestry and Finance Committee have been assisting in the parish office. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Carol McMullen for ensuring that our bills have been paid in a timely fashion and serving as a financial secretary, and Sharon Sollami and Amanda Wrazien for covering the office with great regularity.

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Maria Zengion for her contribution to our services with her musical talents and gifts, and to Meredith Huveneers, Max Roche, Francis McMullen, and Chris Gallo. Your combined music talents and gifts allow us all to engage more deeply in the beauty of our Anglican worship and maintain high liturgical standards. I would also like to express a heartfelt "Thank you" to all who serve regularly as lectors and intercessors, altar guild, and ushers for our liturgies, and all who have hosted coffee hour and provided hospitality. My sincere thanks to our Senior Warden, Mickey Baccoli, and our Junior Warden, Rick Ammenhauser, to all the members of the Vestry and those who serve on the Finance Committee for your commitment and work in maintaining and preserving our buildings and wonderful liturgical treasures, and the keeping our books, records, and newsletter. It takes many faithful people to ensure that St. Luke's is able to execute and fulfill its ministry and mission, from those who serve in formal capacities in elected parish leadership, those who serve on various committees, and those who lovingly and selflessly volunteer, often unknown and behind the scenes.

I wish particularly to offer the gratitude of the entire parish to all who serve in elected leadership, as Vestry members, and as Delegates to Convention. In particular, I wish to acknowledge Sharon Sollami and David Wegner who served as Delegates to Convention; Francis McMullen who is completing a six year term of service on the Vestry; and Rick Ammenhauser who has served a full term on Vestry and graciously agreed to stand for re-election to a second (three-year) term

In closing, I would like to reiterate something I said last year, because it still holds true. St. Luke's is a vibrant and exciting place in which to serve, grow in the knowledge and love of God and worship together. In many ways, we offer more opportunities and forms of ministry than a parish double our size. We are a warm and welcoming community, and from a spiritual, missional, ministerial perspective, we are strong.

From a financial standpoint, we are facing beyond serious challenges which, as I mentioned, you will hear more about from Mickey Baccoli, our Senior Warden, and Tom Zurla, our Treasurer. Our fixed costs like insurance, salaries, Diocesan assessment, professional fees and the like keep rising; and our aging, historic buildings are a challenge to maintain. While we have no debt, we have been running on a deficit budget for years. We have offset the deficit by drawing down on our investment funds by approximately \$180,000 annually. We can no longer operate as we have for so many years. For 173 years, St. Luke's has survived thanks to the sacrifice of generations who preceded us. We can no longer operate as in past years, and as responsible stewards of our legacy, we will need to make some changes. What those are remains to be seen, but they may be

substantial. In it all, I believe God will guide us as we discern solutions and directions for the future and the actions that we will need to take. Your participation in this effort will be critical, coupled with robust annual stewardship and fundraising.

Our challenges are tremendous. Our challenges are not unique to us, however. Across the church, parishes are consolidating, sharing clergy and staff, or closing outright. Gone are the days of our parents and grandparents church. We are living in a time of great societal change, and while the church is not dead – no, indeed, our God lives! - we can no longer coast by assuming that the parish we love will always be here, as it always has been. Change is hard and it is human to resist and fear change. In the coming year, we are going to need to be courageous people, not fretting or worrying about next steps, but trusting in God who sustains us, strengthens us, and gives us life.

May God, our God, be with us and in all we do. May he be praised, and may we walk forever humbly with our God through whom all things are possible.

Faithfully yours,
Rebecca A. Barnes✠
Rector

SENIOR WARDEN REPORT

I thank you for coming today. I am so grateful to be here with you today in this beautiful sacred space as the members of St. Luke's Church. To be here is to feel the presence of God. We are here to move closer to God, for ourselves, with each other and for each other. And we strive to be as welcoming as possible to anyone who wants to move closer to God with us. These are the things that make me grateful to be with you here today.

St. Luke's faces significant financial stress. For decades, we have been spending more than we receive in pledges and plate offerings. For example, in 2023, we spent roughly \$320,000. Our total income derived from pledge and plate offerings was around \$90,000. That \$90,000 is less than the \$110,000 required to pay our utility bills for one year. That \$90,000 is less than the \$110,000 required to pay our full time rector's total compensation package for one year. If every giving unit supporting St. Luke's continues to give at our average pledge rate of \$1,614, we would need nearly 200 pledging units to meet our goal of \$320,000. Through our stewardship campaign, we have made some gains in recent years in our total income from pledges. The number of pledging units is currently 44, and that number has been stable or slightly increasing in the past few years. You may recall that last year's annual meeting almost had to be postponed because we did not have even 25 members in good standing attend in person. The bottom line is

that we are far outspending what we take in in pledges and plate collection, and have been for at least the 20 years that I have been a member here.

Until now, we have had the luxury of relying on withdrawals from our endowment to make ends meet. Our endowment came to us because of the generosity of members of this church who wanted to support St. Luke's long after they passed, by remembering the church in their wills. Our financial dependence was not only on the interest and capital gains of the endowment funds, but we have also had to withdraw from the principal. Our once seemingly ample endowment is now nearly depleted. We anticipate that within the next two years, we will no longer be able to rely on these funds for the operation of our church.

This means that now is the time to make some hard decisions about what is really important to us, for our own worship and for our mission as a whole. You may notice some changes in the next year that are intended to decrease the reliance on our endowment funds. The less money that we are able to draw down from the endowment accounts, the longer those funds will last. Ideally, we should be transitioning to more sustainable and fiscally responsible levels of spending in the long term.

I know that by providing an honest representation of our financial situation, I am breaking every rule from Stewardship 101. That is to say, that people respond better to a stewardship campaign where they are asked to give of their resources as an act of prayer, an acknowledgment of their love of God, a personal decision to make a spiritual and financial investment in the sustenance of our beloved church. Focusing on a desperate need for money can easily backfire. People may not want to give support in what they think could be a losing battle. While all those things are true, my position as senior warden comes with an expectation and moral obligation to speak the truth, even when unpleasant or inconvenient.

We who are here today, and others who are here by Zoom or otherwise with us in spirit, we, the members, the body of this church, are brothers and sisters in Christ. We all need to be involved going forward in the long term success of St. Luke's Church. We must all constantly reassess our own contributions of time, talent and treasure as our situation evolves. We must all find ways to further our own worship, and work to grow our community. How do we attract more people to participate in our mission and support our existence? Which programs are necessary for us to continue to function and grow in our common faith? Which are necessary to prevent losing more members? Where can people volunteer within the church to help reduce costs and provide relief to Mother Barnes and others who are already doing so much every day to keep things running?

Our financial situation notwithstanding, St. Luke's is a vibrant community of faith. We are blessed to have Mother Barnes as our Rector. I am thankful for all she is doing to advance our faith journey. Our faith brings us together. Our community sees the strength of our faith through our works. I thank you for your past, present and future contributions of time, talent and treasure

in support of St. Luke's Church. I ask for your prayers for St. Luke's. I, Mother Barnes and the vestry of St. Luke's welcome your ideas and feedback as we move forward.

Thank you,
Mickey Baccoli,
Senior Warden

2023 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2023 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

The 169th Annual Parish Meeting was held on January 29, 2023. After much effort attempting to reach a quorum, The Reverend Rebecca A. Barnes, Rector, announced that by combination of those attending in person and those attending virtually, there was a quorum present and the meeting was then called to order.

Appointment of a clerk-protem (in the absence of the Vestry Clerk)
Not applicable.

Review and Approval of Agenda

After review of the Agenda, Amanda Wrazien made a Motion to approve; seconded by Jane Merolla and approved by all.

Refer to 169th Annual Meeting & Report dated January 29, 2023, attached

Rector's Report

Mother Barnes read her report saying, in part, that in November of 2022, she began her seventh year at St. Luke's and her second year as Rector. She said this past year has been one of the most eventful years we've shared together and how we've returned to a new normal after the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. She reported that although we have not returned to the in-person level of attendance we had prior to the pandemic, St. Luke's has seen an increase in ministry, worship and community. She expressed her thanks to the many people who have served St. Luke's in so many ways.

She also spoke about the serious financial challenges St. Luke's is facing and how we have been running on a deficit budget for many years and have been drawing down on our investments in order to offset the deficit. She said we need to be courageous in the challenges before us and to trust in God who sustains us, strengthens us and gives us life.

She reported on the following topics:

- Worship and Liturgy
- General Statistics
- Faithful Departed 2022
- Christian Education and Formation
- Parish Staffing and Lay Leadership

Senior Warden's Report

Mickey Baccoli thanked all members of the Vestry for their hard work this past year, especially Rick Ammenhauser as Junior Warden, Kathy Selemba, as Vestry Clerk and Sharon Sollami for her work with the food pantry. He also expressed sincere appreciation to the many people, too numerous to mention, that contributed in so many ways. Lastly, he thanked Mother Barnes for providing spiritual guidance through such difficult times.

Review and Approval of the Minutes of the 2021 and 2022 Annual Meeting

Mother Barnes stated that since the 2021 Annual Meeting minutes were tabled at the 2022 Annual Meeting and they have still not been received, she made a motion that members of the Vestry that were present at the 2021 Annual Meeting document the key points of that meeting and affirm by signing to confirm that everything happened in good order. The motion was approved by Mickey Baccoli; seconded by Sharon Sollami and approved by all.

The written 169th Annual Meeting Report was distributed. After review, and there being one edit as to spelling, a motion was made by Jane Merolla to accept the Report as amended; seconded by Carol Winn and approved by all.

Committee Reports (given as follows)

Music – Maria Zengion, Organist and Choirmaster (read by Mother Barnes)

Pastoral Care Committee – The Reverend Rebecca A. Barnes, Rector

Daughters of the King – Carol McMullen, Secretary, and The Reverend Rebecca A. Barnes

Women of St. Luke's – Kathryn J. Selemba

Community Outreach Ministry – Sharon Sollami

Safety Net – Robin O'Hearn

Lackawanna Neighbors – David Wegner, Lackawanna Neighbors Board Member

Cypress House at St. Luke's -The Reverend Rebecca A. Barnes, President and CEO, and David Wegner, Board Chair

Building Committee – Rick Ammenhauser

National Registry of Historic Places – Ella Rayburn and The National Historic Committee

Warren Memorial Garden Committee – David Wegner, Chair

Annual Convention Delegates – Sharon Sollami

Stewardship Committee – The Reverend Rebecca A. Barnes

Finance Committee – David Wegner, Committee Member

Treasurer's Report and 2023 Vestry Approved Budget – Tom Zurla, Treasurer*

Mother Barnes added that St. Luke's received a COLA (Cost of Living) grant in the amount of \$4,164.65 from the Diocese that had voted to allocate \$100,000 to be used to offset the cost of living salary increase within the parishes.

A vote was taken by voice acclamation to approve the Committee Reports as given. All were in favor.

Resolution and Vote to Reduce Vestry Number

Mother Barnes reported that in August the Vestry approved a reduction in the size of the Vestry from nine members to seven as one person had stepped down and one was unable to attend regularly. She said the Canons of the Diocese require a Resolution to go before the parish at the Annual Meeting in order to effectuate the change. Mother Barnes read the Resolution, placed a vote upon the parish that at the recommendation of the Vestry, it be adopted and then made a motion to accept the Resolution as is printed in the 169th Annual Meeting and Report. The motion was seconded by Amanda Wrazien and approved by all.

Election of New Members of the Vestry and Lay Delegates to the Diocesan Convention

Presentation of Bylaws as pertains to Vestry terms and elections

Mother Barnes reviewed the Diocesan Bylaws with regard to election of Vestry members.

Introduction of Nominees Present

Mother Barnes announced that there are two open positions on the Vestry and announced that Sharon Sollami has agreed to stand for election to a second term of three years and Tom Zurla has agreed to stand for election to a first term of three years.

Nominations from the floor

There were no nominations from the floor.

Election and vote

A vote was taken, ballots were collected, and all nominees were elected to serve.

Commissioning of New Parish Leaders

The elected members of the Vestry, the Lay Delegates and Alternate Lay Delegates to the Diocesan Convention were then commissioned by Mother Barnes.

Blessing

Mother Barnes concluded the meeting with prayer.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Selemba
Vestry Clerk

MUSIC AT ST. LUKE'S

The American clergyman, social reformer, and abolitionist, Henry Ward Beecher, once wrote that "Music cleanses the understanding; inspires it, and lifts it into a realm which it would not reach if it were left to itself."

At St. Luke's, music is central to our worship and how we pray and glorify God in hymns, psalmody, polyphonic choral works, and instrumental music. The shape and structure of our liturgy is enhanced through the power of music which lifts our understanding and inspires us, as Beecher said, to a realm which we would not reach otherwise.

In 2023, the music program at St. Luke's continued to work towards bringing the finest music to our parish community and the greater NEPA region. This year, our professional singers Max Roche, tenor; and baritone, Francis McMullen, were joined by Meredith Huveneers, a new member, whose vocally versatility enables her to sing both soprano and alto parts, as needed. Additionally, Christopher Gallo, a longtime friend of St. Luke's and the new Artistic Director of the Lyric Consort has been singing with us regularly and strengthening our music program both through his presence singing with the Musicians of St. Luke's on Sundays, as well as with the Lyric Consort. Having developed a healthy roster of local professional and semi-professional singers with whom we work, the quartet has been rounded out by the talents of Gabriella

Tolerico, Madison Zahorsky, Beatrice Chindemi, Lauren Piccotti, Dr. Joshua Harper and others, especially during Christmas and at other occasional services. We have also had additional soloists and substitutes from the Lyric Consort.

This year, we have added a number of new Mass settings to our repertoire such as *Mass* by Susan Calvin Fletcher, and *Missa Oecumenica* by Richard Proulx, after Alexander Archangelsky. This Christmas we sang the incomparable *Missa O Magnum Mysterium* by Tomas Luis de Victoria, with the *O Magnum Mysterium* motet for Communion.

In the past year, St. Luke's was the host venue for a number of concerts and recitals. In April, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic Chamber series utilized our space to offer a concert entitled, *Elegance and Emotion*. The program featured a performance of Joseph Haydn's last string quartet paired with the intensity of Caroline Shaw's *Entr'acte*, and the flamboyance of Spanish composer Joaquin Turina. That same month, we welcomed back the Williams-Zinsky Duo who performed a concert featuring three famous "B's" of classical music: Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. The concert included a rarely heard 4-hand piano transcription of Beethoven's 5th symphony.

In August, St. Luke's hosted Voce Angeli again for their annual benefit concert. This year's performance entitled *Faith, Hope, and Love* benefited the United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Chamber Music Society performed for the first time at St. Luke's in September with a program featuring Trio Elégiaque No.1 by Sergie Rachmaninoff and Piano Quintet No. 2 in A major Op. 81, B. 155 by Antonín Dvořák.

In December, our friends from the Arcadia Chorale performed their annual Christmas concert. The program *A Christmas Rose*, featured selections which presented texts that use the image of a rose as a symbol for the Virgin Mary. The Chorale then helped to get us all in the Christmas spirit by inviting the audience to sing along to favorite Christmas carols.

We were delighted to welcome back once again our dear friends, The Lyric Consort, who performed three concerts this year. At their May concert Lyric celebrated their 30th Anniversary with the program *My Spirit Sang All Day* featuring contemplations of Music, Prayers, Renaissance Torch Songs, Spirituals, plus a premiere work from Richard Wargo. In October, their concert *An American Journey* took us on an excursion through American musical history with the music of Billings, Thompson, Barber, and more. In December, *A Lyric Consort Christmas* featured memorable musical selections and holiday favorites to bring good cheer to the season. The Lyric Consort also provided the music at the Great Vigil of Easter, again this year.

Our Music at St. Luke's brochure highlights the many offerings that we are hosting in addition to our liturgical music program. We are grateful to Diane Kraus for her artistry in designing the brochure again this year. I hope you will pick up a copy from the back table and join us for the many upcoming concerts this year at St. Luke's.

This year, our organ, which was upgraded in 2017, continues to be maintained and periodically tuned by Brunner and Associates of Silver Springs, PA. Our pianos remain under the care and maintenance of Joe D'Alessandro.

On behalf of all the St. Luke's Musicians I would like to thank you for your support of our ministry as we seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by God's people.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria Zengion, Organist and Choirmaster

PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE

The pastoral care committee is a vital ministry of St. Luke's that ministers to the needs of the hospitalized, those in short & long term residential facilities, and at-home worshippers. The two person committee serves the parish under the direct supervision and guidance of the rector, and only after having received the training and licensing required by the Diocese. Then, pastoral care committee members can visit and bring the Eucharist to parishioners in residential facilities and in their homes. Mickey Baccoli, Senior Warden, has long served as a licensed Eucharistic Visitor and in 2023, Sharon Sollami received her license to serve the parish in the same capacity.

Members of the pastoral care committee also assist with arrangements to bring the homebound to St. Luke's as they are able. In addition, the care team strives to provide pastoral ministry to those with ongoing needs and special conditions while maintaining strict confidentiality. Adhering to HIPPA laws, the names of patients are not announced at church services unless authorized by the patient and/or a family member. If requested, the name will be added to the parish prayer list. As restrictions regarding visitors in hospitals, nursing homes, and rehabilitation facilities fluctuated in 2023, so did the number of pastoral care visits. Members of the pastoral care team have been creative in the ways they have been providing care by extending their outreach to those who are celebrating personal milestones with cards, and our Sunday School children are often enlisted to send their artwork to those who are visited. Recognizing the need for parishioners who can not attend in person to feel connected to the parish, visitors bring along copies of the service leaflet, the newsletter, and large print copies of the monthly devotional, *Forward Day By Day*.

In 2023, St. Luke's continued its monthly Eucharist at two local congregate facilities: The Gardens of Scranton and Elan Skilled Nursing and Rehab, formerly known as the Jewish Home.

Unfortunately, because of the increased numbers of Covid cases at The Gardens, the number of visits there has been minimal, but will begin again when circumstances allow. The Eucharist is celebrated at Elan on a regular schedule each month.

Looking ahead in this new year, the pastoral care team has already established a visitation schedule to bring the Eucharist with more frequency to those who are ill or in nursing homes compared to those who are at home worshippers.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev'd Rebecca A. Barnes, Rector

DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

*2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
ST. ELIZABETH CHAPTER – DAUGHTERS OF THE KING
January 28, 2024*



WHO WE ARE: Founded in 1885 by Margaret J. Franklin at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in NYC, the Order of the Daughters of the King® (DOK) is a spiritual sisterhood of women dedicated to a life of Prayer, Service and Evangelism. Today our membership includes women in the Anglican, Episcopal, Lutheran (ELCA) and Roman Catholic faith traditions. By reaffirmation of the promises made at Baptism and Confirmation, a Daughter pledges herself to a life-long program of prayer, service and evangelism, dedicated to the spread of Christ's Kingdom and the strengthening of the spiritual life of her parish. We don't just enroll as members and attend meetings; we take life-long vows to follow the Rule of Prayer and Rule of Service.

As part of our ministry, the DOK offers prayers for our parishioners and friends and has shared prayer requests with Daughters across our Diocese.

In January, the Daughters served as mentors/sponsors for each of the members of the 2023 Confirmation Class, and stood with them as they were confirmed on June 4, 2023.

This year marked the first where regular Chapter meetings were established. In August, a regular meeting schedule was adopted. The 4th Tuesday of each month has been set as the date for the chapter meetings to be held at St. Luke's.

The Chapter participated in diocesan activities throughout the year. A DOK picnic was held in September at Gouldsboro State Park; the Diocesan Assembly of the DOK was held on October 28, 2023 at the Cathedral in Bethlehem.

This fall, starting in September, we began a monthly ministry to the Women's Resource Center for donations of personal care items, bed linens, non-perishable food items, and other necessities for the women and children housed at the Center. The need is great, and they are very appreciative of our monthly donations. A list of items that can be donated is located in the back of the sanctuary near the donations box provided for this purpose.

Our St. Luke's family was saddened at the death of Jim Wimsatt, the husband of Rebecca Beal, of one of our newest DOK members, on October 15, 2023. The Daughters participated in his funeral which was held at St. Luke's on Friday, October 20, 2023.

The Feast Day of our patron saint, Elizabeth of Hungary, was celebrated on Sunday, November 19. It is a special day for the Daughters of our chapter, which is also Mother Barnes' birthday. We enjoy the double celebration!

At our November meeting, we began praying the Anglican Rosary and will continue with this prayer practice at our monthly meetings. We are using a Rosary prayer written by Diane Kraus which holds a special place in our hearts.

The Daughters of the St. Elizabeth, Princess of Hungary Chapter welcome your prayer requests. You may forward such requests in privacy by completing a prayer card located in the back of the sanctuary.

We wish to thank Mother Barnes, the congregation, wardens, and the vestry for their support of our work.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol McMullen, Secretary

WOMEN OF ST. LUKE'S ANNUAL REPORT

This past year, the Women of St. Luke's did not meet on a regular basis. We did get together monthly, however, during the first half of the year to bake our delectable Welsh cookies which we sell for profit. This is a group effort and could not have been accomplished without the help of our cookie-baking volunteers who generously give us their time on a Saturday morning.

The Women of St. Luke's had always maintained their funds in their own checking account, however according to the Diocesan Canons, there can be no ancillary accounts maintained within the parish. Therefore, in May, our account was closed and funds in the amount of \$12,801.31 were deposited into the operating account of St. Luke's, the record of which was entered as a

separate line item under income on our Treasurer's Report for that month. Any future income and/or expenses will continue to be recorded.

Our annual Christmas Gala Luncheon was held on Saturday, December 16, at Cooper's Restaurant. This was a change in location as we usually hold this event in Kreitler Hall, but due to the expected renovation of our kitchen, it was not feasible. As it turned out, having the luncheon on site at Cooper's provided a much more intimate setting and proved to be much more cost effective as well. We had 34 attendees who enjoyed a delicious meal, a cookie table and games. The afternoon provided us with a wonderful opportunity to not only usher in the holiday season, but to visit with each other and have some fun.

Kathryn J. Selemba, President

COMMUNITY OUTREACH REPORT

The mission of St. Luke's Community Ministry Committee (formerly known as the Community Outreach Committee) is to look within and beyond our parish to share the love of God as we serve and connect with each other and our neighbors. We offer our help in two ways: First, by providing direct assistance through parish ministries and then if we find ourselves ill equipped to meet a need, we refer people to any number of community agencies.

Throughout 2023, St. Luke's continued to serve as a satellite pantry for the Friends of the Poor. We opened our doors each month, January through October and on average served 38 households each month. While most of our guests are seniors representing one or two member households living downtown, we did see an increased number of young families with children seeking help this year and we had more than a dozen guests who found themselves in need of pantry services for the first time in their own adult lives. We were fortunate to have a volunteer join us this year who is bi-lingual and this has proven to be a real asset in providing a more welcoming and inclusive environment for our Latino/a guests. This year also saw the addition of offerings for our pet friendly homes. We are grateful to Pawsitively for the Animals, a local 501 (c) (3) for their generous donation of cat and dog food each month.

Early in 2023, the US Surgeon General issued a report entitled, "The Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation". The advisory report called attention to the measurable effects loneliness and isolation can have on one's mental, physical, and societal health. Motivated in part by this report, and the frequent request of our pantry guests to end the Covid hiatus from the Senior Space gathering, the Vestry voted to return to hosting Senior Space on a quarterly basis. From the beginning, Senior Space was meant to bridge the financial gap between paychecks by providing a meal, but more than a meal, the gathering proved to be an opportunity for neighbors to come together for conversation and community building. There were two Senior Space events; one in September and another in December. At the September event we served 30+ people a homemade pasta

dinner and desserts and played prize winning games. Unfortunately, the December event was not so well attended, but nonetheless, we enjoyed a festive holiday lunch with our guests. It is noteworthy that both Senior Space events were sponsored by individual parish families who not only donated food and prizes, but also planned, cooked, hosted, and served our guests.

St. Luke's continues its long standing relationship with the Narcotics Anonymous group that meets daily; Tuesday through Friday from 12-1PM. In addition, we provide meeting space for the groups' leadership to hold their business and planning meetings. This year, and for the first time, St. Luke's extended its hospitality to the Mid-Atlantic Region Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous for their annual meeting, with more than 35+ in attendance from Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and DC.

As a founding member of Safety Net, an agency that provides emergency assistance to the poor, and with the diligence and commitment of Robin O'Hearn and her family, St. Luke's also continues its partnership with Safety Net; for the summer months, reusable grocery bags hang from our pews for parishioners to fill before Robin and her family deliver them to the pantry located at Covenant Presbyterian Church.

In 2023, St. Luke's welcomed STRIVE, The Pennsylvania State Transition Reentry Incentive Validating Endeavors Program to hold their monthly meetings. STRIVE began in February of 2022 by The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, (specifically, by the Scranton District Parole Office) The goal of STRIVE was to assist previously incarcerated people in making a successful transition back into their communities. The number of community partners that wanted to lend their support and expertise in the areas of education, behavioral health, and financial literacy to STRIVE's clients grew quickly and so did the need then for a larger meeting space. Kreitler Hall has provided the perfect space for STRIVE to gather to strategize about ways to help those previously incarcerated to be successful not only by helping to reduce the risk of recidivism but in strengthening our communities, too.

In addition, Peer to Peer, which is a mentor-based support group that couples formerly incarcerated people with community advisors meets twice each month at St. Luke's. Their goal is to provide advisors to offer support and guidance to ex-offenders facing a multiple of challenges as they re-entry society.

St. Luke's involvement in STRIVE and Peer-to-Peer, demonstrates a clear alignment with the mission of Cypress House, our own 501 © (3). Cypress House will serve as a prison re-entry program, with the bakery, vocational training, and encompassing social services. So it is essential that St. Luke's, all of us, continue to engage and build relationships with the agencies and professionals that are already working to meet the needs of those who have served time in prison.

There are lesser noted, but no less impactful ministries that are ongoing in our parish:

- Our Free Little Library continues to see a lot of traffic and is sustainable because of the generous donations of books.
- In February of 2023, we hosted a “pop up” baked goods giveaway. A local grocery generously donated fresh baked bread and pastries that we distributed to those in need and passersby from a table set up in front of our parish. What a wonderful way it was to live into what it means to be “in the heart of the things”.
- In April, parishioners created and filled Easter baskets to be given to those in need in our community.
- In December, we collaborated with Oak St. Health for a ‘pop up’ fresh produce giveaway; open to all, but specifically for those in our downtown apartments, the same folks who normally visit our monthly pantry.
- In December, we joined with the McAuley Center, in serving as a drop off point for their annual Toy giveaway. We focused our efforts on collecting gifts for older children, and our parishioners did not disappoint. With just two and 1/2 weeks to collect and with the generosity of the parish, we presented the center with a barrel overflowing with gifts.
- In November, in the midst of the Hamas-Israeli war, the al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza was all but destroyed by a bomb blast. The hospital is managed by the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem, and so in response to an appeal for prayers and donations from the Archbishops of Canterbury and Jerusalem, St. Luke's collected a special offering to go directly to the Diocese of Jerusalem.

A yearly summary of the St. Luke's Community Ministry Committee would be incomplete if it did not include an invitation; an invitation to every parishioner to consider where your strengths in ministry might be. Where can you share those strengths with our neighbors? How can you help to build relationships in service to our neighbors; in service to God? Prayerfully consider where you might serve in any one of the established ministries of the parish, or perhaps you have a suggestion for a new ministry. If so, please share your thoughts with Mother Barnes.

Submitted by Sharon Sollami

LACKAWANNA NEIGHBORS

Lackawanna Neighbors has a 50 year history of providing rentals and housing to Scranton area residents. It was originally founded 1968 under the name Scranton Neighbors as a cooperative interfaith project of the Scranton Lackawanna Jewish Council, Covenant Presbyterian, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Scranton, to provide public housing in Scranton. As a founding member, St. Luke's still holds a seat on the board.

The Lackawanna Neighbors Board met in May and October of 2023. The board oversees operations at the Midtown and Florence apartments including approval of annual budgets, personnel compensation, upgrades to the properties, and disbursement of scholarship funds. In June 2023, a Health Fair was held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Midtown Apartments.

David Wegner
Lackawanna Neighbors Board Member

CYPRESS HOUSE AT ST. LUKE'S



Cypress House at St. Luke's is an affiliated 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Scranton. Cypress House was incorporated in 2016 in response to the skyrocketing incarceration rates. Lackawanna County ranks amongst the highest in the nation in experiencing extreme racial and societal biases against those reentering the community post-incarceration, exacerbated by the reentry population being largely shut out of the labor market

We seek to offer a compassionate response to the previously incarcerated. We seek to imitate the kind of God who loves unconditionally, who offers second chances, who walks with the excluded in the hope of a deeper, wider inclusion for them. We seek to move closer to the marginalized in the hope of obliterating the margins.

It is our hope that Cypress House Bakery will counter prevalent societal will, policies, and practices that continue sustained employment inequities toward the formerly incarcerated. Cypress House's mission is to offer employment, vocational training, and educational opportunities in St. Luke's parish house to previously incarcerated women and men, with a special concern to hire individuals who identify as black, Latino/a, indigenous, or other marginalized identities. Cypress House aspires to be a catalyst for change in northeastern Pennsylvania, addressing the racial and social injustices to which we bear witness. In short, we aim to provide hope and transformation to the formerly incarcerated by standing with them, investing in their futures, and through inclusion and compassionate acceptance dispel the illusion that we are separate. We are not. There is no us and them; only us.

This has been a record year for Cypress House. We have enjoyed record fundraising and national recognition through grants we have received in recent months. We welcomed several new Board Members: The Rev. Robert B. Peiffer, Ph.D., retired minister of the United Church of Christ; Brandon Reish, Esq., Assistant Federal Public Defender, Office of Federal Public Defender for Middle District of PA; Dr. Megan Loftus, President & CEO, Friends of the Poor; and most recently, Mr. Kenneth Goode, Foundation Executive of the D H Ross Foundation; The

Honorable Thomas Vanaskie, Appellate Court Judge, ret.; and Ms. Alejandra Marroquin, Community Organizer, Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine.

This year, we received assistance and guidance from consultants in the bakery industry, we hired an architectural firm to design and oversee the renovation of the St. Luke's church kitchen to be a fresh new learning environment for our apprentices, and have forged re-entry partnerships.

This summer the board met for a visioning retreat day during which we set an official date to open. The facilitator for our Visioning Day was Robert Schirling, a retired partner of the public accounting firm Ernst & Young. Robert facilitates Visioning Workshops in his capacity at E&Y, as well as for non-profit organizations, and we are grateful to him for volunteering to facilitate the session which was attended by both board members and St. Luke's vestry members.

We are thrilled to share all some of the highlights of this year as we look forward to our ribbon cutting in 2024!

Key Accomplishments

- December 2022 - Open House - CHB hosted friends and supporters as part of the First Friday Scranton monthly community gathering.
- United Thank Offering Grant - CHB is the 2023 recipient of this \$50,000 grant from the Episcopal Church. In November, Mother Barnes and Helen Wolf were part of a nation webinar with UTO 2023 grant recipients.
- Fundraising increased 66% Funding from grants increased from \$58,800 to \$166,800 - an increase of over 180% in one year.
- Martina Bacarella Architectural Firm - With over 30 years' experience, Bacarella specializes in structural design and historic preservation. She is on the board of the NEPA Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and serves as board president of the Architectural Heritage Association in Scranton.
- Architectural plans - Two designs with 3D renderings will transform St. Luke's parish house kitchen into a bakery arts classroom.
- Streamlined equipment list - The list of needed appliances and equipment was updated because of the new kitchen designs. Purchase of equipment was made through a 50K grant from the Victory Noll Sisters of Indiana.

Financial Overview of Cypress House

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES (for fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023)

Public Support and Revenue

Corporate/Individual Contributions \$62,226

Grants 53,500

Fundraising Events 445

Total Public Support \$116,171**Expenses**

Fundraising \$2,813

Administration 5,595

Total Expenses \$8,408**NET ASSET INCREASE - \$107,763**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents \$238,997

Total Assets \$238,997**Liabilities and Net Assets**

Total Liabilities \$ -

Net Assets

Without Donor Restrictions \$188,997

With Donor Restrictions 50,000

Total Net Assets \$238,997**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS - \$238,997**

As you can see, this past year was a busy one for us and we have made tremendous strides towards reaching our goal of opening the Cypress House Bakery and offering services and programs to those who will be part of our Cypress House family.

In 2024, we look forward to:

- Construction
- Reentry simulation with the Department of Corrections
- Hiring our Bakery manager

- Developing a Sustainability plan
- Completing Revision of bylaws

Most especially, we look forward to opening our bakery and fully launching our re-entry program. We have been building relationships with the Federal CARE Court, Lackawanna County Peer-to-Peer, the Commonwealth STRIVE Program, the Lackawanna Prison Advocates and others, with whom we will be partnering, and look forward to working with them.

In closing, it should be mentioned that The Cypress House Board is a “working board” and each person contributes in special and unique ways. We could not have made the progress that we did this past year without the help of our committed Board Members, especially those serving on the Development Committee, and Dr. Helen Wolf who has worked tirelessly as our chief grant writer.

We are grateful to all of our donors and all those who lift up this important mission. We thank you for your support, and hope you will continue to stand with us in 2024. We hope you will join us as we strive to build the Beloved Community.

Respectfully submitted,
The Reverend Rebecca A. Barnes, President & CEO
Mr. David Wegner, Board Chair

BUILDING COMMITTEE

It's been another busy year at Saint Luke's with what I consider to be some major steps forward regarding some of the structural issues facing our beloved buildings. In January we signed a new service contract with Rite Temp Mechanical to do repairs and maintenance on our heating and air conditioning units. Rite Temp agreed to match the amount we were paying our old contractor (Penn State Mechanical) while giving us a bit more comprehensive coverage.

In August we needed to address some security issues involving access to the church. It was determined that multiple keys that had been passed out to different individuals who are no longer actively involved with the church were still outstanding and unable to be returned. We decided that seeing how as we needed some repair work done on the lock on the main entrance door to the church it was the perfect time to have all three doors (the 232 door, the main entrance and the ramp door) re-keyed. This has given us a 100 percent accurate list of who has access to the church.

Also in August we signed an agreement with Dunmore Roofing to do what would be our biggest repair job of last year. we had all major damages repaired on the roofs of both buildings. This improvement came with a hefty \$12,000 price tag but, considering that it has stopped the damage

being caused by multiple leaks, some of which we were not even aware of, I believe it was a step desperately needed for the preservation of our buildings.

In October we decided to move ahead with an improvement that I'm sure will make everyone involved with cookie baking very happy. After multiple accidents involving trucks driving in the alley, and the kitchen exhaust fan that extends off the building in the alleyway behind the church being hit, we voted to have the fan relocated to a safer place. Ironically after we decided to make the repair but before the contractor could come to work on it, the fan was hit again by another truck leaving the fan unusable and causing us to cancel cookie baking for that month. On the bright side, we were able to get some insurance information off of the driver of the truck (which was not the norm) that helped us pay for a new smaller fan that sits safely up against the building.

I would like to mention and say thank you to the Women of Saint Luke's for donating the money needed for that repair not covered by the insurance payment we received. In closing I would like to mention some contractors we remain in relationship with. Tommy Noll snow removal for our parking lot and Cunningham snow removal for the steps and sidewalks. Keating plumbers for handling our back flow system. Cintas for our fire emergency needs and Newberry Services for our security system.

Respectfully submitted,
Rick Ammenhauser

WARREN MEMORIAL GARDEN

The Warren Memorial Garden Committee meets from 10 a.m. to noon on the second Saturday of each month from April to November, weather permitting. In October, a new slightly larger shed was installed in place of the existing one. We are grateful to Rick and Donna Ammenhauser, Sal Sollami and Paul Bransfield for their work in removing the old dilapidated shed. I would also like to thank Mickey Baccoli, Diane Kraus, Bernie Ott, Carol Winn, Albert Guthrie, Rebecca Beal and Ella Rayburn and for their help in the garden.

David Wegner
Warren Memorial Garden Committee Chair

**ANNUAL DIOCESAN CONVENTION DELEGATE'S REPORT:
Lay Delegate Summary of 2023 Diocesan Convention**

This year's Diocesan Convention was held in Center Valley, PA on October 13th and 14th. St. Luke's was represented by elected Lay Delegates David Wegner and Sharon Sollami, and our Rector and canonical clergy, Rev. Rebecca Barnes. Our senior warden, Mickey Baccoli was also in attendance, but was not a voting delegate.

The two day event began on Friday night with worship, dinner, and a Q & A session with Bishop Kevin Nichols and Bishop Clarence Bester, Bishop of Wangaratta from the Anglican Church of Australia.

On Saturday, the focus was on the business portion of the Convention. Under consideration and presented for vote were five distinct resolutions, all of which were passed by Convention vote. Those resolutions are summarized as follows:

2024 Clergy Salary Schedule included a 5% cost of living salary increase for all clergy and lay staff effective January 2024;

1. the Budget of the Diocese of Bethlehem;
2. the closing of Holy Cross Episcopal Church (Wilkes-Barre);
3. an amendment to the wording of the Constitution of the Diocese of Bethlehem as follows:
 - a) *“Every Convention shall be opened with Prayers, as directed by the Bishop, and at every Convention there may be a celebration of the Holy Communion at the direction of the Bishop”.*
4. and a resolution seeking a one year continued study of a potential reunification of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania and the Diocese of Bethlehem.

Much of the Diocesan Convention focused on the work of the ten-member Reunification Discernment Committee as they explore “a period of intentional exploration” regarding the future reunification of the Diocese of Bethlehem and The Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania. Both Dioceses are responding to the reality of declining numbers, while actively addressing the call to steward our resources, and support vibrant ministry throughout our regions.

The work of the Committee will result in one of three outcomes:

- Each diocese would remain independent;
- the two dioceses would collaborate in ministry and share resources;
- or we would become one diocese.

With the passing to the resolution to continue the discernment process for another year, the committee will take the following steps leading up to the 2024 Diocesan Convention:

- Continue to analyze data and feedback
- Focus on feedback and areas brought forward for greater attention
- Consider models for further collaboration and possible reunification
- Remain in conversation with other dioceses in discernment
- Continue to engage and seek input from across our dioceses

The 2024 Annual Diocesan Convention will be a joint convention with The Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania to be held October 18th and 19th at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College.

This report is a brief summary of the extensive work and future plans of the Reunification Discernment Committee. Parishioners throughout the Diocese of Bethlehem are encouraged to follow the work of the committee closely; the details of which can be found at <https://diobeth.org/diocesan-convention-2023-summary/>

Respectfully submitted by
Sharon Sollami and David Wegner

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

St. Luke's 2023-24 Stewardship Campaign officially kicked off on Sunday, September 3, 2023. At that initial meeting, committee members strategized about the campaign's theme, "Rooted in Abundance" and Mother Barnes spoke about the ways she had already begun to introduce parishioners to the campaign via the service leaflets, our social media platforms, and the parish newsletter.

The theme of the campaign, "Rooted in Abundance" reminds us all that our own generosity is formed by the simple truth that God has blessed us infinitely with all the gifts of Creation. When we are truly grounded in that knowledge and take stock of our lives, we realize that our response to God's generosity should be from the standpoint of plenty rather than scarcity.

The stewardship campaign ran through Christ the King Sunday, November 26, 2023 at which time we had the ingathering of pledge cards. Throughout the campaign, parishioners heard from our Senior Warden Mickey Baccoli, our treasurer Tom Zurla, and Meredith Huveneers about how and why they choose to support the parish, financially and with their many gifts and talents.

A series of letters was sent to parishioners from Mother Barnes, Mickey Baccoli, and another from the stewardship team as a whole.

Our stewardship (those funds contributed by pledge) received to date number 44 pledges which is down six from last year. We have several parishioners who pledged last year from whom we are hoping to still receive a pledge card however, and have several others who contribute regularly via Tithely whose pledge card is still pending. The total pledged amount for this year, to date, is \$69,130 which reflects a decrease of \$5,728. We have confidence that when missing pledges are received, it will actually be an increase over 2023. The average pledged amount is \$1,571 which is an increase of 4.94% from last year. The median pledge has decreased by \$144.00

The table below gives a comparison of the 2017 through 2024 pledges:

Year	Pledging Units	Average Pledge	Median Pledge	Total
2017	55	\$1,010.00	\$520.00	\$55,576.00
2018	49	\$1,144.00	\$780.00	\$56,053.00
2019	54	\$1,154.00	\$780.00	\$62,309.00
2020	50	\$1,194.00	\$780.00	\$59,677.00
2021	29	\$1,421.00	\$1040.00	\$41,218.00
2022	41	\$1,420.00	\$1040.00	\$58,084.00
2023	50	\$1,497.00	\$1,144.00	\$74,858.00
2024	44	\$1,571.00	\$1,000.00	\$69,130.00

We wish to thank each person who contributes to the mission and ministry of St. Luke's through their talent, time, and treasure. We especially wish to thank those who made a financial commitment via a pledge. Each year, our finance committee has the arduous task of developing a budget; a budget that reflects both the expected revenue and estimated expenses of the parish. Their ability to create that budget is based, in part, on the information provided in parishioners' pledge to the parish. A pledge is indeed a sacred commitment between the giver and God, and it is also a tool used by the finance committee to prepare the yearly budget and to help plan for the year ahead. It also assures that those pledging are counted among those who are givers of record to St. Luke's. If you have yet to submit a pledge, it's not too late. Pledge cards are available on the table in the rear of the Nave, or you may contact Mother Barnes or any member of the Stewardship team to receive a pledge card. Committee members also include Kathy Selemba, Mickey Baccoli, Thomas Zurla, and Sharon Sollami.

Annual giving letters will be mailed in the coming weeks to all contributors for contributions made in 2023.

Respectfully submitted,
The Stewardship Committee

FINANCE COMMITTEE
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Annual Report to the Congregation Fiscal Year End 2023

The Finance Committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month. The members include: Tom Zurla (Treasurer), David Wegner, Carol McMullen, Diana Castellano (Bookkeeper) and Mother Rebecca Barnes (Rector).

The Committee's Membership is involved in the financial activities of St. Luke's, including:

- Compilation of Congregational financial data for the annual parish report.

- Review of endowment accounts.
- Providing recommendations to the Vestry on fiscal matters.
- Ensuring operational checks and balances are in place.

The 2022 pledge receipts were \$87,915.86, plate offerings were \$6,790 and there was \$11,455 in special gifts, \$2,345 in rental income, \$1,368 in Easter and Christmas offering, \$48 for Initial Offering, \$310 for Special Offerings and \$4,275.55 for the All Saints Memorial Fund; Event Income was \$3,291.01 and the Building Fund had contributions of \$800. That is a total of \$118,598.42.

St. Luke's Endowment accounts (St Luke's Revocable Trust, Warren Memorial trust and Davis Charitable Trust) had an end of year combined total market value of \$424,432.04 and there was a balance of \$14,690.20 in the Diocesan fund for a total of \$439,122.24 in investments.

Our total expenses for the year were \$310,572.86.

David Wegner
Finance Committee Member

TREASURER'S REPORT

Since our last Annual Meeting, St. Luke's has continued to use its resources to engage and minister to the parish and the surrounding community. Whether it is opening our doors in support of Friends of the Poor food pantry or offering our local seniors an enjoyable afternoon of food and community for our Senior Space, we have never wavered from our mission and "being in the heart of things".

The resources that we, the members of St Luke's, so generously pledged and contributed in plate offerings have reached an all-time high this past year at \$94,705.86 Out of these funds, we have been able to minister to members of our community, continue the Religious Education, both youth-based and adult-based for many within and outside our walls, and offer a space dedicated to the enrichment of everyone who enters our sacred red doors.

It is important to note is that a significant amount of our pledged income goes to our Diocese in the form of our Annual Assessment (\$31,695.72) and Acceptance (\$2,400.00), or approximately 36% of our pledges. It also must be noted that \$23,133.74, or an additional 24% of pledges goes to our utilities, not including any repairs or maintenance that need or needed to be done.

It is important to clarify what may be misinterpreted as a "Charge" from the Diocese in the form of Assessments and Acceptance. These are not solely found within the Episcopal Church. Many other Faith communities have similar items; how they are calculated and "assessed" is where the difference is.

Our Diocesan Convention has established the 2024 assessment rate as 12% of Normal Operating Income (NOI) of the 2022 Parochial report. The 2024 Acceptance rate is 3% of the NOI of 2022. These totals go towards making the Diocesan budget.

Our NOI is based on both our pledges/plate offerings as well as drawing from our savings (endowment). If our NOI is less, the Assessment would be less, if more, than it would be more.

To circle back, just these 2-line items (Assessment/Acceptance & Utilities) account for 60% of our total pledges. How do we accomplish the rest; additional salaries including our Rector, additional ministries such as our music program along with many other vital pieces that make up St. Luke's? To put it bluntly, what ministry is more important than another?

I will pause to share a personal note. When I first came to St. Luke's in 2019 looking for a place to receive the Sacrament of Marriage, meeting Mother Barnes for the first time, participating in Mass, seeing how much activity was going on, hearing our beautiful quartet and organist for the first time, and ultimately finding my spiritual home, I assumed, as I'm sure many new or even old to this Church, how financially sound this Church must be.

As I became more involved, the fact is, we are steadily drawing the remaining balance off our endowment by approximately 24% each year. Based on our end of year statement, we have approximately 16 months left of funds, including the 12 months of 2024.

While we will be forever grateful to the legacy families of St. Luke's, we are at a crossroads financially. Monies that have been spent and that we continue to need to draw down from cannot be replenished. It is financially impossible, regardless of market conditions. The pledges we are so grateful to receive cannot support the day-to-day expenses of this parish alone. Our pledges do not even cover our Rector's total compensation package. To run this church on a weekly basis, it costs us approximately \$6,000.00. There are weeks we sometimes only see several hundreds of dollars, hence where the drawing down of the endowment comes into play.

We are now at a point where very difficult decisions will need to be made and conversation must be entered into for guidance from our Diocese if we are to sustain, not only this church building, but this parish.

I share this not to frighten anyone, but to give you an honest picture of the finances of St. Luke's. A church that continues to do so much good within the community and for so many communities need your help. We must look for new and exciting ideas to ensure our survival. We must find ways to increase our pledges and bring more people into the community we hold so dear at St. Luke's.

We must prayerfully consider what it means to be "church" and why it is so important that we, as a parish, continue to be "in the heart of things."

I submit this report, respectfully yours,
Tom Zurla
Treasurer of St. Luke's Episcopal Church

ST. LUKE’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH - 2024 BUDGET

		2024	2023	2023
		BUDGET	ACTUALS as of 12/2023	BUDGET
REVENUE				
4001-00	Pledges	90,000.00	87,915.86	79,000.00
	Non-pledge Contributions			
4002-00	Plate Offering	6,000.00	6,790.00	6,000.00
4003-00	Special Gifts	3,000.00	11,455.00	3,000.00
4003-05	Rental Income	5,000.00	2,345.00	1,000.00
4004-02	COLA Grant		4,164.65	
4006-00	Easter Offering	800.00	616.00	800.00
4007-00	Christmas Offering	1,000.00	752.00	1,300.00
4008-00	Initial Offering	-	48.00	50.00
4009-00	Offering – Decorations	3,000.00	2,996.00	3,000.00
4011-00	Miscellaneous Income	100.00	336.47	1,000.00
4012-00	Interest Income	5.00	3.75	5.00
4013-00	Housing Endowment Income	500.00	625.52	500.00
4200-01	Endowment Regular Income	180,000.00	180,000.00	180,000.00
4510-18	ASMF Designated Account	1,500.00	4,275.55	1,500.00
4530-00	SPECIAL OFFERINGS	2,500.00	310.00	
4539-19	Event Income	3,000.00	3,291.01	3,000.00
4530-26	Women of St Luke’s Income		13,643.31	
4600-00	Building Fund Contributions	1,500.00	800.00	1,500.00
4700-00	Restricted Gifts			
4800-00	Reimbursements - Health/Dental	17,292.00	17,655.00	
Total Revenue		315,197.00	338,023.12	281,655.00
EXPENSES				
5000-00 RECTOR				
5010-20	Continuing Ed	\$ 600.00	\$297.56	600.00

5010-19	Pension	18%	\$ 15,029.95	\$12,432.36	14,314.21
5010-18	Life Insurance	\$16	\$ 192.00	\$192.00	192.00
5010-17	Dental Insurance	\$57	\$ 684.00	\$1,368.00	684.00
5010-16	Health Insurance	\$1,384	\$ 16,608.00	\$31,344.00	15,672.00
5010-15	SECA	7.65%	\$ 5,934.24	\$5,208.48	5,651.22
5010-14	Salary	5.00%	\$ 47,497.04	\$45,235.20	45,235.10
5010-13	Housing	5.00%	\$ 30,068.88	\$28,637.04	28,637.00
5010-12	Phone/Car		\$ 600.00	\$	1,400.00
5010-10	Supply Priest		\$ 1,200.00	\$1,346.37	1,200.00
Total 5000-00	RECTOR		\$ 118,414.11	126,061.01	113,585.53
5100-00	SECRETARY *				
5100-03	SS Medicare & Taxes	7.65%	\$ 596.70	\$	596.70
5100-01	Secretary's Salary	\$18	\$ 8,190.00	\$	8,190.00
Total 5100-00	SECRETARY				8,786.70
5200-00	MAINTENANCE				
5200-08	SS, Medicare & Taxes	7.65%	\$ 1,377.71	\$1,245.79	1,312.10
5200-01	Salaries	5.00%	\$ 18,009.26	\$16,283.68	17,151.68
Total 5200-00	MAINTENANCE		19,386.97	17,529.47	18,463.78
5300-00	MUSIC Organist & Quartet				
5300-11	Substitute Musicians		\$	\$5,232.30	
5300-09	SS, Medicare & Taxes	8.50%	\$ 1,156.68	\$1,143.48	1,700.09
5300-08	Salaries	See Wsheet	\$ 13,334.55	\$14,948.35	22,233.88
Total 5300-00	MUSIC		\$ 14,491.23	\$21,324.13	23,933.97
5400-00	WOMEN OF ST LUKES				
5400-01	Supplies			255.4	
Total 5400-00	WOMEN OF ST LUKES			255.4	
5500-00	FINANCE Bookkeeper				
5500-09	SS, Medicare & Taxes		\$ 96.39	\$47.21	91.80
5300-08	Salaries	\$18	\$ 1,260.00	\$617.03	1,200.00
Total 5500-00	FINANCE		\$ 1,356.39	\$664.24	1,291.80
5600-00	DIOCESAN				
5600-02	Diocesan Assessment		\$ 35,518.00	\$31,695.72	31,695.72
5600-01	Diocesan Acceptance		\$ 2,400.00	\$2,400.00	2,400.00

Total 5600-00	Total Diocesan	\$ 37,918.00	\$34,095.72	34,095.72
5700-00	BUILDING			
5700-07	Organ Maintenance	\$ 2,500.00	\$895.00	2,500.00
5700-06	Capital Improvements	\$ 10,000.00		
5700-05	Utilities (Water, Sewer, Electric)	\$ 25,000.00	\$23,133.74	20,000.00
5700-04	Service Contracts	\$ 7,500.00	\$6,450.75	7,500.00
5700-03	Maintenance - Supplies & Repairs	\$ 10,000.00	\$12,916.15	10,000.00
	Maintenance - Snow Removal	\$ 1,000.00	\$115.00	1,000.00
5700-02	Insurance (Wcomp & Liability)	\$ 23,000.00	\$23,963.14	23,000.00
5700-01	Heat	\$ 25,000.00	\$19,407.26	20,000.00
Total 5700-00	BUILDING	\$ 104,000.00	\$86,845.04	84,000.00
5800-00	OFFICE			
5800-07	Office Supplies	\$ 3,000.00	\$2,729.39	3,000.00
5800-05	Office Automation/Phone	\$ 9,000.00	\$9,454.86	8,000.00
5800-04	Personnel Clearances	\$ 100.00	\$13.00	100.00
5800-02	Postage	\$ 600.00	\$509.40	600.00
5800-01	Office Service Contracts	\$ 3,000.00	\$2,975.62	3,000.00
Total 5800-00	OFFICE	\$ 15,700.00	\$15,682.27	14,700.00
5900-00	ALTAR			
5900-04	Altar Music Program	\$ 1,000.00	\$696.39	
5900-03	Altar Supplies	\$ 1,000.00	\$1,271.98	750.00
5900-02	Altar Flowers & Decorations	\$ 2,000.00	\$2,983.90	2,000.00
Total 5900-00	ALTAR	\$ 4,000.00	\$4,952.27	2,750.00
6000-00	OUTREACH			
6000-05	Hospitality	\$ 750.00	\$577.19	750.00
6000-08	Youth	\$ 500.00	\$306.00	500.00
6000-06	Outreach Evangelism	\$ 1,250.00	\$854.71	1,250.00
6000-04	Outreach Events	\$ 1,000.00	\$325.00	1,000.00
6000-02	Education, Conf., Meet.	\$ 500.00	\$850.41	500.00
6000-01	DOK	\$ 250.00	\$250.00	250.00
Total 6000-00	OUTREACH	\$ 4,250.00	\$3,163.31	4,250.00
TOTAL EXPENSES		319,516.70	310,572.86	297,070.80
NET REVENUE OR (LOSS)			27,450.26	(15,415.80)

ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS OF THE VESTRY AND DELEGATES

The final order of business today is to elect new members of the vestry. There are two open positions on the Vestry. The following members of St. Luke's have agreed to stand for election to the Vestry: Richard Ammenhauser for a second term of three years, Kimberly DeSanto, for a first term of three years; and for Lay Delegates to Diocesan Convention, Sharon Sollami and Mickey Baccoli; and as Alternate Lay Delegates to Diocesan Convention, David Wegner (1st alternate) and Donna Durland (2nd alternate).

Per the 2016 Bylaws of all Parishes in the Diocese, "each Annual Parish Meeting shall elect persons to serve on the Vestry replacing those members whose term in office has ended. The length of one term of office for members of the Vestry shall be three years with one third of the members, or as near as may be, elected each year at the Annual Parish Meeting. A vestry member shall not be eligible for re-election until after one year after his or her second term has ended." In accordance with the Diocesan Bylaws, "The Vestry shall fill any mid-term vacancies in their number or among the officers of the Parish by majority vote."

The Bylaws further stipulate that The Senior Warden shall be elected annually by the Vestry, upon nomination by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, from among the members of the Vestry. In the coming weeks, I will be nominating one of the Vestry members to serve as Senior Warden, to be voted upon at the next meeting of the Vestry on February 7, 2024. Additionally, The Junior Warden shall either be elected annually from among their number by the Vestry or shall be appointed by the Rector. The appointment and /or election of the Junior Warden will occur at the next Vestry meeting. Finally, per the Diocesan Bylaws, the Clerk and Treasurer shall be elected annual by the Vestry. These elections will also be held at the February 7, 2024 Vestry meeting.

I will now accept nominations from the floor.

If there are no other nominations from the floor, I ask for a report from the tellers regarding the tally of votes from the parish election. Once the report of the election is given, we will conclude today's meeting with the commissioning of new officers.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev'd Rebecca A. Barnes
Rector

COMMISSIONING OF NEW PARISH LEADERS

The newly elected and appointed leaders gather at the front of the altar.

Senior warden: On behalf of the congregation of St. Luke's, I present:

_____ for Member of the Vestry

_____ for Member of the Vestry

_____ for Lay Delegate to Diocesan Convention

_____ for Lay Delegate to Diocesan Convention

_____ for First Alternate Lay Delegate to Diocesan Convention

_____ for Second Lay Delegate to Diocesan Convention

Celebrant: Have these leaders been elected by the congregation or appointed by the vestry in accordance with the bylaws of our congregation?

Senior warden: They have.

Celebrant: *(to the new leaders)* Do you commit yourselves to carry out the responsibilities of the office to which you have been appointed?

Leaders: I do.

Celebrant: Do you reaffirm your commitment to follow Christ and to serve this congregation in his name?

Leaders: I do.

Celebrant: *(to the congregation)* Will you do all in your power to support these leaders with your prayers, your honest yet gracious communication with them, and your willingness to help them carry out Christ's ministry in this church?

Congregation: We will.

Celebrant: In the name of this congregation I commission you for this work, and pledge you our prayers, encouragement, and support. May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you, that in this, and in all things, you may do God's will in the service of the kingdom of Christ. *Amen.*

Let us pray. Almighty God, look with favor upon these persons who have now reaffirmed their commitment to follow Christ and to serve in his name. Give them courage, patience, and vision; and strengthen us all in our Christian vocation of witness to the world, and of service to others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



The Rev. Linda Grenz is the publisher, CEO and founder of LeaderResources.

NOTES



ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

"In the heart of things"

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The Rev'd Rebecca A. Barnes, Rector

The Vestry

Class of 2024

Rick Ammenhauser, *Junior Warden*

Francis McMullen

Class of 2025

Mickey Baccoli, *Senior Warden*

Bernard Ott

Kathy Selemba, *Clerk of the Vestry*

Class of 2026

Sharon Sollami

Thomas Zurla, *Treasurer*

Musicians of St. Luke's

Maria Zengion, Organist and Choirmaster

Meredith Huveneers, Max Roche, Francis McMullen, Christopher Gallo