

# Our Lenten Journey Begins

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17, and continues until Easter, which is Sunday, April 4.

During this penitential season, we reflect on Jesus's sacrifice and our own mortality and seek reconciliation with God and others.

St. Mary's is joining with Concordia Lutheran Church and Emanuel Lutheran Church to offer special services and programs during Lent.

## Ash Wednesday, 7 pm on Zoom

Liturgy of the day service includes invitation to a holy Lent, confession, readings, homily and music, as well as a special joint choir anthem virtually produced by Jun Lee, Emanuel's director of music.

## Each Wednesday during Lent, 7 pm on Zoom

A short Zoom service including the Way of the Cross readings, music and reflections on the Passion of Jesus by lay preachers from the three churches.

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# Happenings

## Lenten Bible Study

Concordia invites us to join a Lenten Bible Study, via Zoom, twice each week, led by Pastor Marschhausen. Each discussion session will be held twice: once immediately after the Sunday morning Zoom worship, and again on Wednesdays at noon via Zoom.



Our Bible focus will St. Mark's Passion and Resurrection Accounts, Mark chapters 14-16.

Everyone will receive texts, notes and commentary, plus the Zoom link.

If you would like the study material ahead of time, please email Pastor Marschhausen at [therevjm@me.com](mailto:therevjm@me.com)

Here is the schedule:

## Sunday, Feb. 21, 11 am and Wednesday, Feb. 24, noon – Mark 14:1-31

Intro to Mark and The Plot Against Jesus through the Upper Room

## Sunday, Feb. 28, 11 am and Wednesday, March 3, noon – Mark 14:32-72

Gethsemane, Jesus' Arrest and Trial Before the Council

## Sunday, March 7, 11 am and Wednesday, March 10, noon – Mark 15:1-20

Jesus' Trial Before Pilate

## Sunday, March 14, 11 am and Wednesday, March 17, noon – Mark 21:47

Jesus' Crucifixion and Death

## Sunday, March 21, 11 am and Wednesday, March 24, Noon – Mark 16

Mark's Resurrection Account(s)

## Sunday, March 28 – Palm/Passion Sunday, 11 am [No Wednesday]

A Conversation on the "Triduum" or How Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and The Easter Vigil Prepare Us for Next Sunday!



# Financial Summary

## Year-End 2020 – Operating Statement

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*By Joy Dorin, Assistant Treasurer*

	Year End-- Actual	2020 Budget	Year End--% of Budget
<b>Total Income</b>	\$346,088	\$333,328	104 %
<b>Pledge Income</b>	\$212,418	\$225,000	94 %
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$347,333	\$357,308	97 %
<b>Net Surplus (Loss)</b>	(\$1,245)	(\$23,980)	5%

### Notes

- What a challenging year it was – in so many ways!
- The closing of the church and the cancellation of in-person services and parish activities in mid-March had a significant impact on our finances.
- From a financial standpoint, there are several important takeaways:
  - ◊ Despite not being able to come to church, parishioners faithfully kept up with their pledges.
  - ◊ Through government assistance and the bequests of former parishioners, we were able to cover most of our fixed expenses.
  - ◊ A mild winter with few storms and lower than expected utility bills helped us on the expense side.

### Income

- Pledge income, while less than projected, remained surprisingly strong.
- Total income was slightly higher than projected because of the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan and several non-recurring/unrestricted bequests we received.
  - ◊ On paper, this combination of unexpected income – approximately \$80,000 – masked the fact that income sources other than pledge income (parish events/fundraisers, plate offerings, Iglesias and other rentals) were greatly reduced due to the closing of the church building because of COVID-19.

### Expenses

- Total expenses were slightly below projections because of lower snow removal expenses and utility expenses due to the mild winter and church closure.

### Net-Surplus/Loss

- The year ended with a loss of \$1,245, for all intents and purposes a break-even year. If not for the non-recurring and unrestricted bequests and the PPP loan, the loss would have been \$81,100.

# God Speaks in Our Time



**By the Rev. Ann Lovejoy Johnson**

Dear Friends,

We are in an “ordinary time” now in our church year, the Sundays after the Epiphany. During this time, we hear the stories of Jesus being revealed to the people. The scripture stories invite us to reflect on how we experience Jesus, and how God’s Spirit stirs in us.

What’s amazing, if we think about it, is that God reveals God’s Self in every time and every generation. In that sense, we are no different. And yet, the messages God gives us and the ways God is revealed are also particular to our time, to who we are, and

what we need for this time we are living in. God spoke in a particular time through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, and God is still speaking. This is at the heart of these Sundays before Lent (which comes early this year, on Feb. 17).

Just like both are true—God spoke ages ago and still speaks now—God comes to us with messages that are hopeful and ones that are hard to hear. Both are true. We are people who are hopeful because the Prince of Peace has come and the time is fulfilled. We are also people who are called to the hard work of justice and reconciliation. The work of God’s mission.

While we wrestle with our place in the world as people of faith, and face difficult decisions about the sustainability of St. Mary’s, we do this with the Spirit of God as our guide. We trust that God’s desire for us will be revealed. We trust that we can listen deeply to the Spirit and to one another. We do this work together, knowing that God continues to be revealed to us in our time.

May God bless us with listening ears and open hearts to hear God speaking to us in our time.

*Ann*

## GHIAA Winter Meeting Held

**By Deacon Karen Fedorchak**

The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA) winter Assembly Meeting was held online on Jan. 14. The first part of the meeting was a review of what was accomplished in 2020.

Since the pandemic stopped the Legislature from meeting for a while and so the two proposals regarding Clean Slate (expunging records of released prisoners with low-level felonies after a period of time to enable return to normal lives) and Welfare Liens (erasing a law that requires loans received when in need to be repaid) were postponed. Now we are in the process of reconnecting with legislators to gain their support to pass these proposals. Our members and church congregations are asked to write letters, email and call local legislators to gain their support.

After the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor murders, the clergy of GHIAA and others joined in a march to City Hall to request that Hartford institute a Police Review Board, which was eventually accomplished. The Legislature will bring the Police Review Board proposal up for further discussion and will decide how it will be worded and implemented statewide.

The GHIAA Board has decided that all their work will focus on antiracism and support of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

GHIAA has made a major request of Governor Lamont to declare that racism is a public health crisis. He has not acknowledged this request, and GHIAA members are requested to email, write or call him to put pressure on him to accept this request and follow through

on implementing it.

Due to the pandemic, the Healthcare Committee has had to hold back from getting final help in obtaining leftover medicines from doctors and hospitals to donate to the needy. Meanwhile, this group has been studying the needs of families with children with asthma to have suitable housing for these children.

The Education Committee has been studying the unmet needs of students and teachers in Hartford schools, especially as noted during the pandemic.

GHIAA continues to train new core team members and requests help in their committees to research new proposals.

# Creative, Caring Hands Group (and Friends) Keep “Compassion Line” Filled

**By Donna Indomenico**

Cold, wintry winds and weather are now upon us. Everyone needs to dress warmly when out and about. Our Creative, Caring Hands group has continued to knit and crochet colorful hats, scarves, mittens and socks to hang on our Compassion Line for community members to take as needed. Additional St. Mary's members, community members and women from Concordia Lutheran Church have added their handmade items to the line. Each week, items are put out, taken and then replaced. There is always a continuous supply of warm articles for those in need.

To date, the CCH group had an inventory of 225 items, with 150 items taken from the Compassion Line.

If you have time, yarn, needles and patterns, please feel free to add your completed items to the line. Please notify Sandy Braman or Ruth McElraevy when you pin items on the line so that we can keep an accurate count of the handmade items. Ruth (rmmcelraevy@gmail.com) or I (donnaindo@aol.com) can provide simple basic patterns if you need them. Keep those needles busy and help others stay warm this winter.



**Above, Ruth McElraevy with the Compassion Line well stocked with warm items for community members who need them. At left, some of the items ready to go.**

## CAT “Listening Session” Scheduled

Late last year, St. Mary's parishioners completed the Church Assessment Tool (CAT), a questionnaire designed to help identify the congregation's priorities, aspirations and culture. An executive summary of the CAT's findings was sent to all parishioners.

Parishioners who would like to discuss the findings or ask questions about

how St. Mary's is responding to the results are invited to a “listening session” scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 21, from 11 am to noon on Zoom with the Rev. Ann Lovejoy Johnson and the vestry.

Watch St. Mary's weekly newsletter for information on how to join the Zoom session either by computer or phone.

If it's not possible for you to participate in the Feb. 21 session, call the church office at 860.649.4583 and ask that a vestry member call you.

# New Technology Expands Worship Opportunities

Parishioners soon will be able to experience services of Holy Eucharist with Spiritual Communion—recorded in St. Mary's main sanctuary—every Sunday morning, just by going to the church's YouTube channel.

St. Mary's will premiere the first such service on Sunday, Feb. 7, at 7:30 am., although the recording will be available anytime after that, as well.

This new worship opportunity is made possible by technology the church acquired using part of a generous grant from the Haugh family. The system was installed in January. A letter announcing the additional service was mailed to parishioners in late January. It includes simple instructions for subscribing to St. Mary's YouTube channel. Check the article below and the weekly e-newsletter for information, too.



**Technology consultant Rich Gaudette installs the camera, computer and other technology needed to record and stream the service of Holy Eucharist from St. Mary's main sanctuary.**

## Worship Continues During Closure

The Jan. 27 letter sent to all parishioners explained that both diocesan and state public health recommendations mean that St. Mary's building is likely to remain closed for several more months because of COVID-19. The vestry will, of course, monitor the situation and change that time frame if circumstances permit.

In the meantime, St. Mary's offers numerous worship opportunities:

- **Morning Prayer** via Zoom at 10 am on Sundays in collaboration with Concordia Lutheran Church. Participants say they find that the service, largely from *The Book of Common Prayer*, is fulfilling and offers a level of fellowship not found in a recorded service.
- **Compline** on Zoom at 7:30 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, except on Wednesdays during Lent.
- **Special shared programming** on Zoom at 7 pm on Wednesdays during Lent. This is in collaboration with Emanuel and Concordia Lutheran Churches and features lay preachers from each congregation.
- As described in the article above, we now offer a **Sunday service of Holy Eucharist with Spiritual Communion**, recorded in our main sanctuary and available on St. Mary's YouTube channel beginning Feb. 7 at 7:30 am. It is available for viewing anytime that day. To subscribe to our YouTube channel: 1) type [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) into your internet browser; 2) in the search bar across the top, type **St. Mary's Manchester** and click the search button.; 3) our YouTube channel is the second channel down on the page and has a circular image of the church next to it; 4) click the red "subscribe" button across from the image. Now you're subscribed.
- Beginning in the Easter season, we hope to offer **communion to-go**, as some other Episcopal churches are doing. This will enable parishioners to receive consecrated bread and wine in a drive-through fashion. More details will come soon.
- As the weather gets warmer, we will reintroduce **outdoor services** in some form.

# Annual Meeting: Envisioning St. Mary's Future in a Changing World

## By St. Mary's Vestry

St. Mary's Jan. 31 annual meeting was in many respects like all the annual meetings that have preceded it. Attendees prayed, heard the names of members who'd died, accepted the minutes from the previous annual meeting, elected vestry members and received the financial report.

In other ways this meeting was markedly different. For one thing, it was held on Zoom because of the pandemic.

More importantly, this meeting represented a pivotal moment in the life of the parish. We face immediate, difficult decisions about what God may be calling us to do and about what the future holds for our beloved community of faith. That is because St. Mary's as we've known it is simply not sustainable.

These decisions have been bearing down on us for years. Declining membership and the resulting decline in financial resources have been discussed at annual meetings and all-parish meetings many times. Vestry has wrestled with the issues intensively, especially over the last two years, trying to discern the best course of action. The decisions can no longer be postponed.

## Financial Facts

As explained in the financial report on p.2 of this issue of Happenings and on p. 24 of the annual meeting document, St. Mary's narrowly avoided having an \$81,000 deficit for 2020. Unexpected one-time bequests, a coronavirus-related government loan program and a transfer of monies from the general fund were the only factors preventing that staggering deficit.

Treasurer Gene Marinelli pointed out in his presentation that this is part of an ongoing trend. The number of pledging households has declined steadily, from 156 in 2017 to just 97 in 2021. As a result, pledge income has declined by nearly \$93,000 in the same period. The problem has been com-

pounded since the pandemic, as we have lost other sources of revenue, such as building use and special parish events. The budget for 2021 shows a projected deficit of \$128,535. However, the Finance Committee is exploring several options that could mitigate that deficit, including grants, government assistance programs and use of unrestricted funds.

## We Are Not Alone

What's happening at St. Mary's is happening in mainline churches of all denominations all across the country. The phenomenon is especially pronounced in the Northeast. Our region's population is older, and fewer young people feel drawn to organized religion. Our diocese, the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, has seen numerous parishes close or merge with other parishes. Of the 154 parishes that exist currently, fewer than half can afford a full-time rector. Of parishes with part-time rectors, more than half are less than half-time.

## What Is God Calling Us to Do?

The overarching purpose of a faith community is to do God's work in the world. For many years and over many generations, St. Mary's has done God's work while existing as a particular model: a large, dedicated facility, a full-time rector and sometimes multiple clergy. That model is no longer sustainable. But what form will we adopt going forward so we can remain a faith community and continue to do God's work? That is the critical question.

## Some Options for the Future

As mentioned earlier, vestry members have devoted abundant time, energy, activity and discussion to considering options for a sustainable future for St. Mary's. They recently met with ECCT Bishop Laura Ahrens to discuss these options and learn what, if any, role the diocese would take.

Junior Warden Sarah Tierinni explained at the annual meeting what options are

being considered:

- Reduce our clergy and staff, while remaining in our own building. (ECCT requires that lay worship leaders be identified before it authorizes a change to a less than full-time priest.)
- Rent our church to another church or share the sanctuary with another church.
- Enter into a mutual merger with another Episcopal church in the region. We could sell our property and bring the proceeds into the newly formed entity elsewhere or keep our facility and form the new entity here on Park Street.
- Partner with a church of a different denomination. Share staff and a single campus. Stay on Park Street with the partner church joining us or move to the partner church and sell or rent our property.
- Sell our property and rent space to worship in another church or non-church building in Manchester.
- As a last resort, at some point in the future, close St. Mary's and turn our property over to ECCT's Missionary Society.

We are parishioners as well as vestry members. Over the last several years, we have experienced the grief that comes from facing the changes that lie ahead, and we know every parishioner will, too. But we must trust that the Holy Spirit will guide us as we discover the way forward. We ask for your prayers, ideas, patience and support. We pledge to keep you informed, and we invite you to contact the wardens with any questions or suggestions you may have.

# Scores of Members Attended the Virtual Annual Meeting

The screen shot below shows just a few of the more than 40 parishioners who took part in St. Mary's Zoom annual meeting on Jan. 31. Fun highlights included a slide show of photos of parishioners' nativity scenes and a presentation of special t-shirts to Randy Brown and Ralph Sullivan. Randy and Ralph have been working hard to take care of countless aspects of our building. The front of each shirt reads, "R and R Church Maintenance." The back, shown below, says "Our Service is Divine." Many thanks, gentlemen! And many thanks to *all* parishioners for their dedication to St. Mary's.



## 2021 Vestry Members

Mechelle Olórtegui, Senior Warden  
mechelle.tovar2011@gmail.com

Sarah Tierinni, Junior Warden  
sarah.i.brown23@gmail.com

Gene Marinelli, Treasurer  
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Joy Dorin, Assistant Treasurer  
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Jo-Ann Swanson, Clerk  
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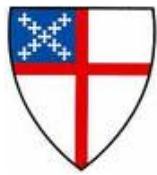
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The Rev. Ann Lovejoy Johnson  
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Karen Fedorchak, Deacon  
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## Worship Schedule

Visit us on  
Facebook!

### St. Mary's Episcopal Church

41 Park Street  
Manchester, CT 06040  
Phone: 860-649-4583  
E-mail: [sandy@stmarysct.org](mailto:sandy@stmarysct.org)

**God cooks;  
we share the feast!**

While our building is closed, please watch your weekly emails (or postal mailings) for information about worship. Also see p. 5 of this issue of Happenings.

- On Sundays at 10 am, Morning Prayer is held via Zoom. Zoom coffee hour begins at 9:30 am.
- On Sundays, beginning Feb. 7, a recorded service of Holy Eucharist with Spiritual Communion will be available on St. Mary's YouTube channel beginning at 7:30 am
- On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 7:30 pm, Compline is held via Zoom.

## Annual Wall out Hunger Drive—And Undie Sunday

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, and continuing throughout Lent, there will be a bin on the porch outside the church office for **Wall out Hunger** donations. Items will be given to MACC. This year, we will focus on toiletries, personal care products and cleaning supplies, since they are always needed at MACC!

Our famous **Undie Sunday** will be on March 7. We will collect NEW undergarments for men, women and children and donate them to MACC for distribution. Watch weekly newsletters for more information.

So many people are in need at this time. Please plan to help.



860.995.1946 or [Mechelle.tovar2011@gmail.com](mailto:Mechelle.tovar2011@gmail.com).

Shopping on Amazon? Remember to choose AmazonSmile when you log on, so that St. Mary's will receive a percentage of whatever you spend. Just go to [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com). Your login and password are the same. If you have questions, contact Mechelle Olórtegui at



**A recent Sunday was "Hat Day" for those who attended the 10 am Zoom service. Here are some of the folks who got into the spirit of the thing!**