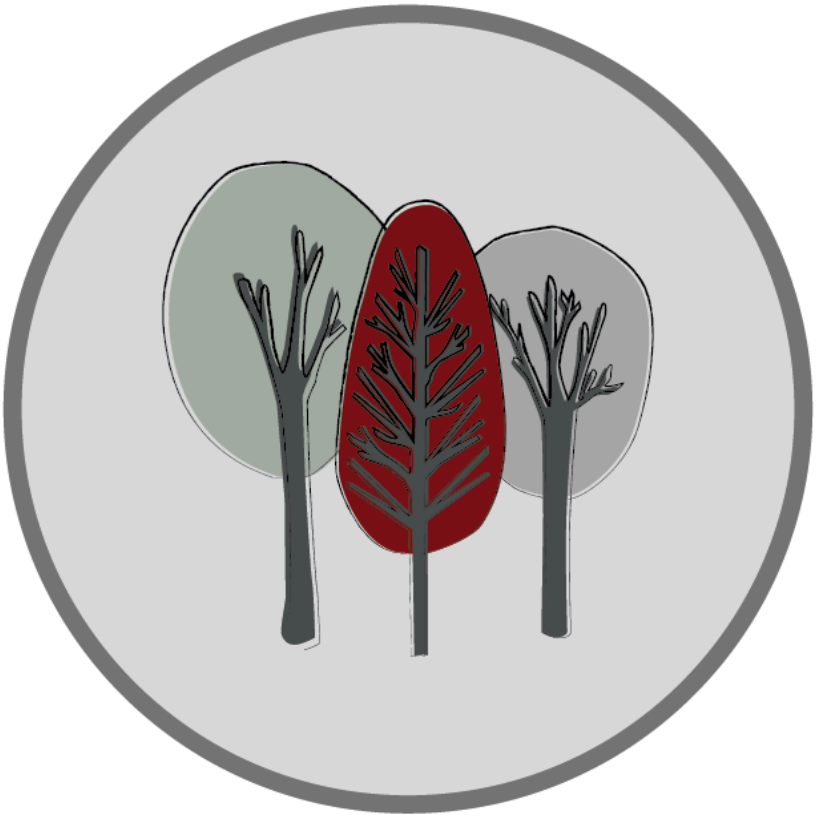
The Parish Church of

St. John in the Wilderness



2025 Annual Report

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Award for Outstanding Service Insert

Annual Parish Meeting
2026 Agenda

Prayer and Call to Order

Logistics/Voter Qualifications

Election of Secretary for the Annual Meeting

Review & Acceptance of 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes

Business

- Rector's Thoughts
- Recognition of Outgoing Leadership
- Elections
    - Positions to be elected
        - Warden (1: 2 year term)
        - Vestry (3: 3 year terms)
        - ECMN Convention Delegates (5 - 3 yr term) Alternate (1-3 yr term)
    - Process for Elections
        - Explanation of Nomination and Voting Processes
        - Call for Nominations from the floor
        - Closing of Nominations
        - Appointment of Election Judges (if necessary)
- Voting (in person only)
- Announcement of Elections
- Financial Business
    - Review & Acceptance of 2025 Financial Report
    - Review of 2026 Financial Plan as approved by the Vestry

Presentation of the Outstanding Service Award

Presentation of the 2026 Chili Contest Winner

Prayer and Adjournment

St. John in the Wilderness Episcopal Church
2025 Annual Meeting Minutes
January 19 2025 11:15 AM
(Onsite)

1. **Opening Prayer and Call to Order:** The Rev Art Hancock

2. **Logistics/Voter Qualifications Explained regarding the Annual Parish Meeting:**
   A. Review voter qualifications and explanation of the nomination process
   B. Canons for Episcopal Church of MN
   C. St. John in the Wilderness Bylaws
   D. Organization of Annual Parish Meeting Booklet

3. **Election of Secretary for the Annual Parish Meeting:**
   Motion made by **Gretchen Brunner** to nominate **Tracy Angelo** to serve as Secretary for this Annual Meeting
   Motion Seconded by **Jim DeMay**

   Discussion: NONE

   Motion: **PASSED (Unanimously)**

4. **Review and Acceptance of 2024 Annual Parish Meeting Minutes:**
   Motion made by **Katheryn Schneider** to approve the **January 14 2024** Annual Parish Meeting Minutes as written
   Motion Seconded by **Emily Brunner**

   Discussion: NONE

   Motion: **PASSED (Unanimously)**

5. **Business**
   A. The Rector's Address to the Parish
      1. Rector's Address presented during Sunday's service and is included in the 2024 Annual Report
   B. Recognition of Outgoing Leadership
      1. The Rev Art Hancock presented Outgoing Leadership Members: Kathy Smith, Al Bradley, Emily Brunner and Barbara Maloney
   C. Elections
      1. 2025 Elections
         a. Warden (1: two-year term)
         b. Vestry (3: three-year term)
         c. ECMN Convention Delegates (3: one-year term)
      2. Explanation of Nomination and Voting Processes
      3. Call for Nominations from the floor
      4. Closing of Nominations
      5. Appointment of Election Judges (if necessary)
      6. Voting (in person only)

a. Motion was made by **Pat Pickering** to approve in person voting only for the 2025 Elections of Warden, Vestry and ECMN Convention Delegates.
Motion Seconded by **Harvey Caldwell**

Discussion: NONE

Motion: **PASSED (Unanimously)**

7. Announcement of Elections

D. Results of Elections
Motion made by **Harvey Caldwell** to accept the nomination of **Mike Carpenter** as Warden for a two-year term
The Rev Art Hancock asked for additional nominations for Warden; there were none.
Motion Seconded by **Will Merrill**

Discussion: NONE

Motion: **PASSED (Unanimously)**

Motion made by **Harvey Caldwell** to accept the slate of incoming vestry members (each for a three-year term): **Gretchen Brunner and Joanna Torgerson**
The Rev Art Hancock asked for additional nominations for the Vestry; there were none.
Motion Seconded by **Will Merrill**

Discussion: NONE

Motion: **PASSED (Unanimously)**

Motion made by 1) **Harvey Caldwell** to accept the nomination of
1) **Tony Angelo** 2) **Tracy Angelo** 3) **Anne White** as an ECMN Convention Delegate (3: one-year term)
The Rev Art Hancock asked for additional nominations for ECMN Convention Delegates; there were none.
Motion Seconded by **Will Merrill**

Discussion: NONE

Motion: **PASSED (Unanimously)**

E. **Treasurer's Report:**
1. Review of 2024 Financial Report by Barry Kostyk
   a. Acceptance of 2024 Finance Report

Motion made by **Pat Pickering** to accept the 2024 Financial Report as presented (included in Annual Meeting Booklet)
Motion Seconded by **Stephanie Sulentic**

Discussion: A question was asked where the reserve/growth fund is located in the financial plan? The reserve/growth fund is not in the annual report or the financial plan. However, the interest from the reserve fund is located in Line Item 409 - Investment Income of the 2025 SJW Financial Plan.

Motion: **PASSED (Unanimously)**

Review of 2025 Financial Plan as approved by the Vestry
Questions regarding Treasurer's Report by **Barry Kostyk**

6. **Presentation of the Outstanding Service Award:**
   The Rev Art Hancock presented **Kathy Smith** with the Outstanding Service Award

7. **Presentation of the 2025 Chili Contest Winner:**
   The winner of the 2025 Chili Contest was **Nicole Korth**

8. **Closing Prayer:** The Rev Art Hancock

9. **Adjourn Meeting**
   Motion made to adjourn by: **Pat Pickering *(12:13 PM)***
   Motion Seconded by **Gretchen Brunner**

   Discussion: NONE

   Motion: **PASSED (Unanimously)**

Respectfully Submitted,

Tracy Angelo - Clerk

Rector's Annual Address to the Parish of St. John in the Wilderness
January 25, 2026

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor ruler, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

My Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

As we come together to reflect on our common life as the people of St. John in the Wilderness, we do so in the midst of a world that seems to be flying apart. And yet, I take great comfort in the above words from Paul's letter to the Romans. Nothing, he says, has the power to separate us from God's love. With all that is happening in our country and in our community, our faith community has beared witness to these words and become a haven for many.

Our parish is comprised of people who have opinions that are all over the map. As such, there have been and will continue to be disagreements among us, but nearly all in our community are resolute in the determination to continue to pray and grow and serve together. And for that, I am immensely proud.

2025 was a special year for us, being the one hundredth year of the laying of the cornerstone for our church building located on the corner of First Street and Clark Avenue. Instead of one big birthday bash for our beloved building, we stretched our celebration over the entire year. With the capable and enthusiastic leadership of Emily Brunner, our Centennial Committee planned and executed monthly events to aid us in our recollection of God's Spirit among us. A winter reenactment of the skidding of the original church building across the ice was held at the Brunner Farm in Grant with the children and youth of the parish doing the heavy lifting (or skidding). Parishioners and other members of the White Bear Lake community enjoyed a special concert celebrating 100 years of fine music offered to the glory of God in the church. Educational programs about our cemetery, our stained glass windows, our history with Native Americans, and our role in the establishment and growth of our town were superb. During the Manitou Days Parade, we gave out hundreds of root beer floats to the community. The capstone of our monthly Centennial Celebrations was a Cornerstone Eucharist in which we welcomed back a number of both parishioners and clergy who have worshipped and served with us in the past. It was such a fantastic and meaningful way to celebrate all of the life and love that has happened in our church building for a hundred years.

An old building such as that of St. John's takes a great amount of care and maintenance. Jake Malark has been our sexton for many years and not only cleans the spaces, mows the lawns, and monitors the condition of the building, but also does smaller repairs. He has been assisted in the last two years by Nick Pearson who faithfully comes to church several mornings each week to help with the cleaning tasks. And, of course, we are blessed by the presence and relentless work of John Brunner and Nick Howe who are at church nearly every week to attend to those repairs that require a deeper dive. All of this is under the direction of Dennis Thoemke who continues to serve as Chair of the Property Committee that must make difficult decisions about which projects deserve our energies most urgently and intently.

There were three larger property projects that were, or are in the process of being, accomplished. Kathy Smith oversaw the completion of the parlor renovation. That space has been utterly transformed into a beautiful and versatile space for both meetings and other gatherings. New carpeting, new ceiling, new lights, new tech, new furniture all make for an inviting space that will serve the parish for years to come. The kitchen has received much needed renovations as well. A new refrigerator has been purchased, the old gas cookstove has been fixed, some of the walls have received a new paint job, a new commercial sink will soon be installed. These renovations will continue over the next several months as we equip our old kitchen to help us offer hospitality to the glory of God. Finally, problem trees have recently been removed from the cemetery, and the diseased ash trees that line the boulevard on First Street are scheduled to be removed this summer. Maintaining the building and grounds of St. John's requires constant attention and financial resources. Our people, however, are up to the task. The building is in fine shape and realistic plans for future maintenance are in place.

Worship continues to be the foundation of all that we do at St. John's. Because it is so important, a great deal of time and energy are expended in preparation. Months before an actual service of worship occurs, lay folks and clergy gather to talk about it and consider ways that we can most effectively draw out the themes of the season and the day. All of that work is then reviewed and then implemented by those who faithfully serve as Altar Guild members, vergers, lectors, musicians and singers, greeters, ushers, eucharistic ministers. Alec Watson, our new Music Minister, has brought new energy to our worship as the Chancel Choir and Heartbeat band lead us in song. The whole process and the amount of life energy that is expended to pull off each service of worship continues to inspire me. It is our communal way of expressing our love and devotion to God.

Nearly as important to our common life as is our worship, however, is our loving fellowship. Indeed, I would conjecture that the primary reason that many come to church on Sundays and Wednesdays each week is to connect with each other. This is as it should be, and we do it well. Nichole Korth and her team of Coffee Hour workers quietly and faithfully provide the food and setting for the rest of us to connect with each other in real and authentic ways. In addition to our Sunday coffee hour(s), we have become accustomed to coming together for several large annual fellowship events as well. Mark Sears and his kitchen team have continued to do the massive amount of behind the scenes work for these lifeblood events, and we remain so grateful.

Another vital component to our parish life is Christian Formation for children, youth, and adults. This, of course, occurs each and every Sunday morning during the school year, but also on other days, especially Wednesday nights. Sylvia Lovett and Kathy Smith have consistently led adult Bible studies on Sunday mornings this year with Sylvia also leading a popular summer Bible study. Adult Connect groups led by lay leaders, book studies and retreats led by clergy, and other special adult formation classes have rounded out the faith development program for adults. Under the leadership of Kate Maxwell, the adult formation program has become an extremely vibrant part of ministry at St. John's, and I remain grateful to all those who have worked diligently to make it so.

Maggie Howe, our Rising Generations Minister, has done a magnificent job by leading Sunday School, Wilderness Wednesdays, Confirmation classes and retreats, and monthly outreach events for our young people. Both students and their parents are fully engaged in both learning and serving. Students have developed bonds with each other and with their adult leaders. A recent and very visible part of the children's Christian formation program has been the *Imaging and Imagining God* work of students and their adult mentors. *The Wild Star* blessed our sanctuary in the Christmas season, and the new spectacular *Epiphany Altar* currently serves as the table on which we prepare the Lord's Supper each Sunday during this liturgical season of Epiphany. In short, Christian

formation, both for students and adults, has never been stronger at St. John's. I am thankful for all those who have worked to accomplish this.

Yet another important part of our parish ministry is our outreach to others. The Little Food Shelf that graces our entrance foyer has become the flagship and most visible expression of our service to the White Bear Lake community. The food shelf is supplied by parishioners bringing in food and other supplies as well as through pledged money to the parish. It remains the only food shelf that I know of in the Twin Cities that is open 24/7 and asks no questions of those receiving. Our deacon, Margaret Thor, has been the coordinator of our efforts, and a special Little Food Shelf Committee is currently being formed to share in its future direction.

In addition to the Little Food Shelf, however, we have engaged in numerous other outreach work throughout the year, supporting other churches and organizations in their projects. A faithful crew of parishioners volunteers to host the very regular blood drives that are offered in our parish hall. Further, we recognize that many of our parishioners are engaged in the work of God in various ways that is not directly supported by the parish. We are doing our best at St. John's to support these people in their individual heroic efforts to serve the least among us.

In all of this work of praying and growing and serving, we are living out our faith together. Both laity and clergy are faithfully playing a part in our parish. We are taking seriously our bishop's charge to become lay-led and clergy supported, and I believe that we have become a model for healthy parish life in this regard. Again, I am exceptionally proud of all of you who have played such a vital role in helping to shape our common life and ministry.

Financially, St. John's remains strong and poised for continued healthy parish life. This is due, of course, to the generosity afforded by you in the form of financial gifts and pledges as well as that of our forbears who generously gave to establish our healthy endowment. Our wardens, Jim DeMay and Mike Carpenter, along with our Treasurer Barry Kostyk and the Vestry have carefully worked hard to ensure that we are living within our means (almost). They have been faithfully assisted by Maureen Vruno who quietly and competently serves as our Financial Coordinator. This important behind-the-scenes financial work of the parish will continue to be challenging as everything becomes more expensive, and as we seek to provide fair compensation to our fantastic St. John's staff.

I also need to express my appreciation to Carrie Thomas who serves as our Parish Coordinator. Carrie's work is at the hub of our common life. Little happens at St. John's without Carrie having her capable input. She has been particularly helpful to me as I have juggled my daily responsibilities as your Rector. Many mornings I have come into the office and have asked Carrie, "what need to be my priorities today?" Carrie, heartfelt thanks to you. I am also so very appreciative to my clergy colleagues, Kate Maxwell and Margaret Thor. They are strong and wise women who have kept me on the straight and narrow! They have provided indispensable counsel to me on a weekly basis, and do so much work for the parish and the diocese on a purely non-stipendiary basis. We are mightily blessed by their presence and faithful work among us.

As I conclude my report on life and ministry at St. John's for 2025, the centennial year for our church building, I am filled with gratitude. I remain amazed at how God's Spirit is working in and through so many of you in our parish. I am proud of where we are and of the journey that has brought us here. Despite so many challenges in these troubling times, we have come together and have stuck together. This resilience and faithfulness to God and to each other is a bold witness to the Way of Jesus.

This will be my last Rector's address to the people of St. John's. I am leaving in just two weeks time to semi-retire, taking a part-time position at a small country parish in northern Wisconsin. I hope that the next chapter of my life and ministry as a priest in God's church will be quieter and more contemplative. I hope to have significant time to spend in God's spectacular natural world, developing a more intimate relationship with the non-human part of God's creation. I look forward to this new chapter.

I will, however, miss you desperately, more than words can express. I have done my best to minister faithfully among you, and I hope to have been helpful to at least some of you in your lives of faith. I need you to know also, however, how crucial you have been to me in my life of faith. The years that I have been with you have been challenging ones in my personal life, and through it all, you have lovingly cared for me and my family. That love has sustained me, and my heart is filled to the brim with gratitude. Thank you.

As I conclude this annual address, I return to Saint Paul's words to the nascent Roman church.

> *"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor ruler, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)*

Like us, Paul himself lived in an extraordinarily difficult time of conflict in which political and religious entities were all vying for power and control. Caught in the middle of the chaos were the fledgling new communities of Jesus' followers who were just beginning to learn and live the Way of Christ. Often, these early Christians received the brunt of abuse. I am sure there were times they wanted to give it all up. But Paul counsels them to persevere. Nothing, he assures them, will be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus. At times such as these, I echo Paul's words and exhort you all to trust in the goodness and loving kindness of God.

The Parish of St. John in the Wilderness is a loving, resilient, faithful community of people who are doing their level best to love and serve and walk in the Way of Jesus. As I leave this community, I do so with immense pride and gratitude. In a world torn apart by the forces of this world, it is my full hope and expectation that this community that God has built among us will continue to faithfully witness in word and deed to God's love and power. May God bless your lives, and may God bless this amazing parish.

Gratefully, and with all my love,

The Reverend Arthur Hancock
Rector

2025 Vestry Members

(terms expire at Annual Meeting on year indicated)

Jim DeMay, Warden 2026
Michael Carpenter 2027
Barry Kostyk, Treasurer
Tracy Angelo, Clerk of Vestry
George Gorbatenko 2026
Stephanie Sulentic 2026
Sarah Harker-Olsen 2026
Tom Hove 2027
Nick Pearson 2027
Jen Miller 2027
Paul Stone 2028
Joanna Torgerson 2028
Gretchen Brunner 2028

Elections and Appointments

Nominations Committee

The Vestry shall consist of the Rector, two (2) Wardens and nine (9) elected Vestry members. In addition to these persons, the Vestry is assisted in its work by the Treasurer, the Clerk, and St. John's staff. Each member of the Vestry shall be an Adult Communicant in Good Standing. It is preferred that nominations be received at least two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting so that all nominations may be printed in the Annual Report. Nominations from the floor of the Annual Meeting, including self-nominations, are allowed.

Nominee for Warden

- Larry Mahoney (two year term)

Nominees to the Vestry

- Ross Jahnke (three year term)
- Michael DeMars (three year term)
- Jacqueline Danda (three year term)

Nominees to ECMN Convention

- 5 to be elected for 3 year term
- 1 *Alternate* (3 year term)

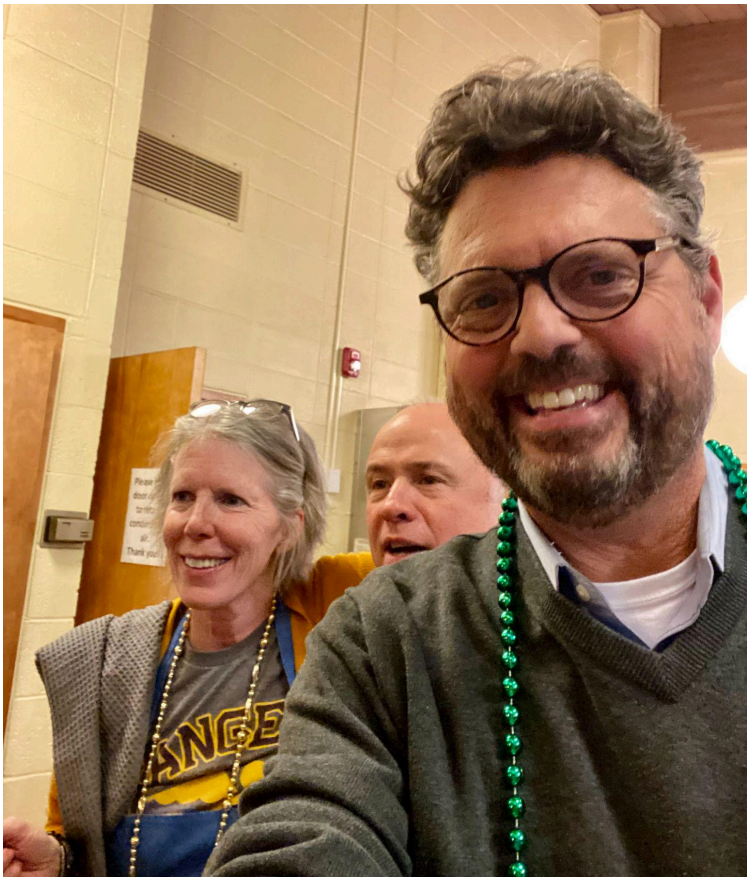
Appointments (to be made by 2026 Vestry)

- Treasurer
- Clerk
- Committee Chairs

Reports

Warden's Report

Dear Parishioners,
As Senior Warden of St. John's in the Wilderness Episcopal Church it is my privilege to present this Annual Report, reflecting on the life and ministry of our parish during 2025.



I want to first express my deep gratitude to Reverend Art Hancock. It has been a blessing to work alongside Father Art whose superior spiritual leadership and pastoral care has been felt by us all. We wish him well in his new position serving the Lord in his beloved northwoods.

A big thank you to our clergy team, my fellow Vestry members, our staff, our committee members and all of you, the parishioners of St. John's, for your dedication, support, and contributions to our church family. Together, we have navigated both blessings and challenges with a spirit of hope and collaboration.
This year has been filled with moments of grace and growth. A few highlights:

*** Centennial of our beautiful church building:** Special musical, historical and social events helped us remember the important legacy of our church in our community and gave us momentum for the future. From root beer floats to the reenactment of moving the church across the lake, it was a great celebration.
• **Worship and Spiritual Life:** We gathered faithfully for Sunday services, celebrated special liturgical events, enjoyed Heartbeat and our Chancel Choir, marveled at the art of our youngest members, and embraced new ways of deepening our relationship with God. Our music ministry and worship teams have inspired us with their talents.
• **Outreach and Community Engagement:** Through programs like our Emergency Food Shelf, First Nations Kitchen, Casa Maria, the Sandwich Project, tying blankets, and sending care packages to our military members, we have extended God's love beyond our walls and served those in need.

• **Christian Education:** Bible study, Adult Formation, prayer groups, Sunday school and our many programs have nurtured faith across all generations. This past year has been a testament to our faith and commitment to Christ.
• **Fellowship and Events:** Thanksgiving Dinner, WIlderness Wednesday, Shrove Tuesday Pancakes, Parish Picnics, Sunday Coffee and Centennial events have strengthened our sense of community and joyfully brought us together.

The Vestry approved the Budget for FY2026 on January 18, 2026. This budget will be presented for its information and review at the Annual Meeting. We continue the constant challenge of balancing responsible budgeting and great needs.

I would like to thank Stephanie Sulentic, George Gorbatenko, and Sarah Harker Olson for their wisdom service on the Vestry. I enjoyed my many consultations with Father Art and Mike Carpenter and our church team.

I invite all of you to remain actively engaged in the life of our church, bringing your time, talents, and prayers to support our shared mission.

God Bless,
Jim DeMay,
Senior Warden

Associate's Report

As I was getting ready to write this year's report, I looked for the Associate's Report from last year and discovered that I didn't have one because I was recovering from back surgery in January. So this year's account contains first of all a big thank you to the St John's community and staff for taking such good care of me during my recuperation. I was a bit overwhelmed by the visits and cards, care and help all of you gave me. I am so thankful to be a part of this parish community and staff.

During this year, I have served in the following ways:

Sacramental & Preaching

- Assisted with presiding and preaching at Sunday and other liturgies and a few funerals Assisted with monthly Cerenity Eucharists
- Set up the seasonal preaching rota for review and changes
- Prepared families for baptism
- Assisted in funeral planning for several individuals

Staff and Collaboration

- Participated in regular staff meetings and projects
- Participated in seasonal planning meetings and retreats
- Collaborated with staff members in formation, parents' retreats, liturgy, music, pastoral ministry, and a bit of administration

Adult Formation

- Convened the Adult Formation Team
- Recruited members for the Team and presenters for events
- Planned and presented offerings such as retreats, courses, book groups and workshops
- Coordinated the Adult Formation schedules
- Wrote adult formation promotional materials

Pastoral Ministry

- Convened and facilitated monthly Circle of Care meetings
- Coordinated ongoing training at Circle of Care
- Collaborated with other congregations in planning another Community of Hope training
- Recruited, trained and scheduled Prayer Ministers for Sunday mornings at 10:00
- Coordinated Eucharistic Visitors
- Met with various members of the parish one on one

Invite Welcome Connect

- Introduced IWC at St John's
- Facilitated Book Study of Invite Welcome Connect
- Organised and facilitated initial IWC organizing meetings
- Supported lay leaders of IWC

Liturgy

- Provided training for Liturgical Planning Team
- Helped recruit members for LitPlan Team
- Supported the lay Facilitator of LitPlan Team
- Wrote prayers, blessings and developed liturgical pieces for Sunday liturgy
- Assembled liturgical planning resources for LitPlan Team

Administration

- Administer & plan Pastoral Care and Adult Formation budgets
- Attend and represent clergy to monthly Altar Guild meetings
- Write annual reports for liturgy, pastoral ministry and adult formation areas
- Write monthly clergy report for Altar Guild
- Report occasionally to the Vestry
- Process financial reimbursements for various events

In addition to ministry at St John's, I participate in the diocesan Convention and clergy retreats, and I am a member of the ECMN Commission on Ministry (serving the last year of two terms presently). I also attend Clericus gatherings as I'm able.

I am an Episcopal Benedictine Sister, founding member of the Benedictine Priory of St Mary. I also have the privilege of walking with a number of folks in spiritual direction.

Kate Maxwell, OSB

Deacon's Report

Thank you to the community here at St John in the Wilderness for supporting my call as a deacon in the Episcopal church. As part of my call and the promises I made at ordination, I am to "show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself" through my life and teachings.

During the past year, I demonstrated servanthood through my actions at the altar. I proclaim Christ's word and preached about his call to us pointing out the needs and concerns of the world particularly surrounding those experiencing food insecurity. With your generosity, I ensure that the food shelf in the foyer is stocked and ready for our neighbors. I applied for and received a grant on behalf of SJW to purchase goods for the food shelf. Many thanks to the Greater White Bear Lake Community Foundation for their financial support. I continue on the Board for the White Bear Area Food Shelf and recently completed a 3-year term as the treasurer. I am appreciative of all of you who serve others in your own lives and work.

I am also the Chair of the Commission on Ministry (COM) for the diocese – ask me or Kate about the work of the COM, we would love to talk to you about it. I am on the Board for the Fund for the Diaconate. This is an Episcopal churchwide fund that assists deacons in financial need. I was just elected for a 3rd time to the ECMN deputation for General Convention scheduled for the summer of 2027. I also serve on the Court of Review for the Episcopal church.

Some other miscellaneous things that I do: I am part of the team that constructs the bulletin (most of the errors you find are likely mine). I participate in the Liturgy Planning Team, Liturgy and Worship committee, the Finance committee, and Program Staff meetings. I am delighted to mentor an elementary student for a 3rd year through Kid's Hope. I lead Morning Prayer and Compline regularly – please join us sometime. I happily assist Maggie as needed. And my husband and I deliver food weekly through Open Arms.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Margaret Thor, Deacon

Intern's Report

I am grateful to the community of St. John in the Wilderness for the warmth and hospitality you have shown me throughout my field education placement this year. As I continue discerning a call to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church, your encouragement and willingness to let me learn alongside you have been a profound gift. My formation has been profoundly shaped by the shared life of this parish, and I am deeply thankful.

One of the most meaningful parts of my ministry this year has been helping with Eucharistic services at Cerenity Senior Care. I have also continued to grow in liturgical leadership here at St. John's, learning new roles in the liturgy and exploring how Scripture speaks into the lives of this community. Two experiences were especially formative: serving on the clergy team during a funeral at St. John's and serving as thurifer for the Christmas Eve services. Both moments deepened my appreciation for the beauty, gravity, and joy of our shared worship. I have been privileged to preach twice at St. John's over the last few months, and your generous feedback and thoughtful engagement have helped me become a more grounded and confident preacher.

Beyond Sunday worship, I have participated in lay Eucharistic visits, supported parish communications, assisted with liturgical preparation, and undertaken a variety of ministry tasks as needed. I also served as a lay delegate at the ECMN Convention in Rochester this year, which provided valuable insight into the diocese's broader life and governance. I have valued the chance to observe and learn from the rhythms of parish life, including staff meetings, planning conversations, and the many unseen acts of care that sustain a church community. I am especially grateful to my Lay Companion Team, whose honesty, wisdom, and willingness to share their stories have been a steady source of insight and encouragement. Supporting bulletin work, joining formation conversations, and engaging with the life of the parish wherever needed have each taught me something new about ministry, collaboration, and the joy of serving Christ in community. These experiences have given me a clearer picture of the daily work of clergy and the deeply collaborative nature of healthy parish ministry.

In my broader formation, I continue my Anglican studies at Bexley Seabury Seminary and am preparing to apply for candidacy for Holy Orders. I am grateful to St. John's for your support as my field education parish and for the ways you have accompanied me in this journey of discernment. Your prayers, questions, and encouragement have strengthened my sense of call and helped me grow in confidence and clarity.

Thank you again for the privilege of learning and serving among you. This parish has been a place of grace, growth, and deep encouragement for me, and I carry that with gratitude into the next steps of my formation.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Lilley, Ministry Intern

Music Ministry

I first want to express how grateful I am for the welcome I've received from the St. John's community. As a new Minnesotan this has meant a lot to me, and I hope to honor the trust and appreciation you all have shown me in my first season here.

In the last four months since I accepted the Minister of Music role, I have been learning the traditions, relationships, and unique gifts of the music ministry here at St. Johns. With the help of our volunteer director Val Koutek, I led the Chancel Choir in weekly rehearsals and in bi-monthly Sunday morning worship. As a choir, we tackled a formidable amount of music ranging from 15th century chant to French

Romanticism to contemporary sacred choral music. Our annual Lessons & Carols service was a highpoint; I'm very proud of the work we accomplished, and the reflective, joyful atmosphere we created.

Alongside songleader extraordinaire Carrie Thomas, I've co-led Heartbeat, our contemporary band. We've woven together a repertoire including orchestrated versions of well-loved Episcopal hymns, music from the Black Gospel tradition, and folk songs. I was particularly thrilled with our Christmas Eve service – strings, guitars, sleighbells, oh my!

In addition to choosing hymns, planning special music, and accompanying services on organ and piano, as Music Minister I've also collaborated with the St. Johns Liturgy Team. For Advent, we worked together to write an original psalm refrain, or *antiphon*, that I then set to music for us to sing during the psalms during the season. This refrain was written by St. Johns, for St. Johns, and it was a pleasure to hear you all sing it with such love during the month of December.

One last special aspect of this past season for me was including Rising Generations, our youth program, in Heartbeat rehearsals once a month. Church was where I learned how to play music with others as a young person, and I think creating a space for kids to be creative in the presence of a loving, supportive community is deeply important.

Thank you all again for making me feel so welcome at St. Johns. I look forward to continuing to lead and grow the music ministry here.

With care,
Alec Watson
Minister of Music

Rising Generations

Last year was action packed for the Rising Generations crew and all of the adjacent folks we roped into our activities.

In January, we began our partnership with the East Metro Episcopal Church Collective. We kicked it off in January with a MLK Day of Love in Action. Since then, we've collaborated to host a Vacation Bible School, two Pre-YE diocesean youth retreats, Dungeons and Dragons events, and more. This upcoming summer, we are planning an East Metro week of service and fellowship. It is important for our young people to develop relationships within the broader Episcopal community, and we will continue to create opportunities for them to do so in authentic and meaningful ways through this partnership.

In the last year, we have expanded our Wilderness Wednesday programming. This fall we began a Youth Group that meets twice a month. We've started to rebuild a children and youth music program in partnership with Heartbeat. Per the request of our Rising Generations community members, we've done many service projects, taken another trip to the North Shore, and put on our first Haunted Undercroft. We will continue to use the input we receive from young people and their families to shape and guide our program offerings.

In the spring, we were awarded the Imaging and Imagining God grant through the Lily Foundation and Philips Theological Seminary. We are part of the second cohort receiving these funds, which are given loosely and without a curriculum. The program we've designed at St. John's could very well be paving the way for a new model of expressive ministry for young people. In short, we explore big ideas about the nature of God with the guidance of mentors, and then we respond to those explorations through artistic expression. Through this creative process, we are building powerful intergenerational relationships within our community. We are experiencing worship in new ways. Our young people are creating incredible installations in response to their increased understanding of who God is and how God works in our lives. It is so very beautiful. We hope to continue this wild ride of art making for years to come.

Our Rising Generations programming is youth driven. It is based in practical spirituality and discipleship. It is collaborative and intergenerational. I am amazed over and again by the way that our older kids engage our younger ones. By the deep friendships, not only between young people, but between parents, too. By the welcoming and inclusive culture that we have created. And by the fact that my own kids genuinely look forward to going to church. This might sound overly sentimental for an annual report, but metrics cannot capture the amount of love that is within this community. Let's keep it up.

With Love,
Maggie Howe

Invite Welcome Connect

Invite Welcome Connect is a ministry of transformation that equips and empowers individuals and congregations to cultivate intentional practices of evangelism, hospitality, and belonging. In the fall of 2025, several people participated in a study of Mary Parmer's book *Invite Welcome Connect*. They were energized and ready to build on St John's already welcoming character by engaging the IWC process.

The presentation in November that introduced IWC to the Vestry was well received. Invite Welcome Connect will be introduced to the congregation at the annual Meeting in January of 2026 as well as an introductory gathering after each service on February 1. IWC will unfold at St John's over the course of 2026, with the formation and training of teams interested in one or another aspect of the process.

The IWC core group includes Gretchen Brunner, Barb Livermont, Joanna Torgerson, Judy Caldwell, Pam Hove, Val Koutek, and Cindy Kallstrom with Kate Maxwell and Chris Lilly for staff support.

Come to the intro gathering on February 1 or contact a member of the team for more information.

Kate Maxwell, OSB

Altar Guild

Altar Guild Members: Tracy Angelo, Pris Campbell, Jackie Danda, Kelly Desmet, Cyndi Domin, Shelley Page, Pat Pickering, and Emily Waymire, engage weekly with St. John's community.

We are proud of the work done by Sacristans Steve Johnson and Tony Angelo. The Sacristans step up whenever they are needed, regularly setting up aisle-labra's/hurricane lamps, hanging seasonal garland and banners, and carrying heavy items from storage. Sacristans are *there,* sanctuary/or sacristy, whenever.

Altar Guild (AG) members do amazing work performing all service set ups, clearing/or cleaning, maintaining essential service tools. Whether laundering credence cloths and purificators, polishing or repairing chalices or candelabra's, it's what AG does. Altar Guild coordinates all St. John's service needs for Sundays, Baptisms, Weddings, or Funerals. All regularly used service items, in AG's care are, along with our seasonal parament colors, hangings, ornaments are displayed when needed.

We use our Altar Guild *Google* files for meeting agendas, minutes, and service schedules with some success, along with our Altar Guild Service Guide. Altar Guild notifications are both emailed and texted.

Altar Guild members consider themselves St. John's ministers, working alongside each other and seeing God in one another while prepping our altar and sanctuary areas.

Not replacing retired Altar Guild team members and Sacristans. Recruiting new Altar Guild team members and Sacristans is awkward because AG service remains constant. We are learning Altar Guild work is more demanding than difficult, and many hands make lighter work.

We are hopeful in recruiting new Altar Guild members and gaining new perspectives while continuing our Altar Guild fellowship, supporting each other, and continuing St. John's service. We have an experienced and talented Altar Guild team who know their way around our sacristy and sanctuary. As you watch our Altar Guild team prepare for services, you see an engaged all-hands-on-deck effort to accomplish St. John's ministry.

Respectfully submitted,
Emily Waymire

Liturgy

Liturgy requires the ongoing, faithful effort of many people: Altar Guild, planning teams, musicians, vergers, lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, ushers, greeters, schedulers, administrators, and clergy.

In 2025:

The **Liturgy and Worship Committee** met monthly to review upcoming plans for liturgy and oversee implementation of the many details of worship. This group is composed of representatives of the Vergers, Altar Guild, and Vestry as well as members of the clergy team.

The **Liturgical Planning Team,** made up of both staff and parishioners, met monthly to plan seasonal liturgy. A couple of months before each season, the team gathers together to reflect on the gospels of the season, think about what is going on in that season (church, schools, community, country, world), and consider what the congregation might need. Suggestions are made for environment, themes, and tone for the season.

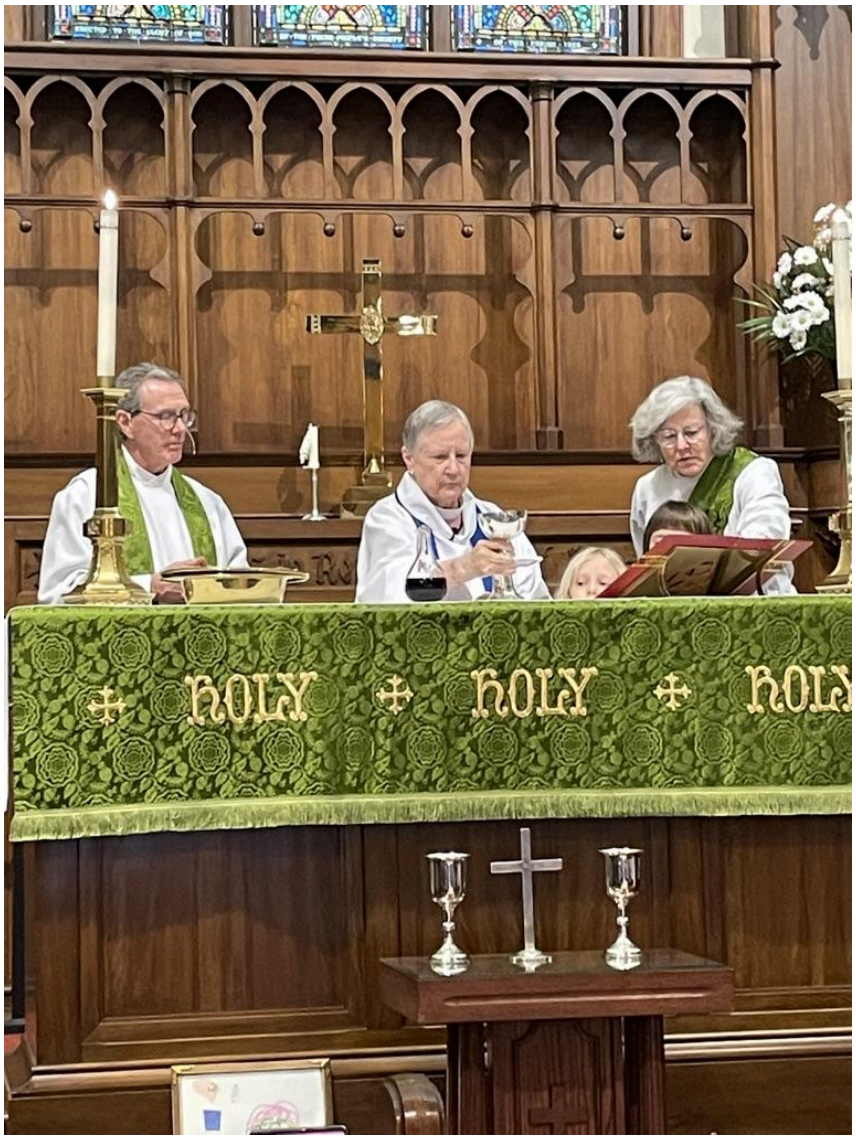
Members take on tasks to do the planning of the seasonal liturgy using various resources, including the BCP, other accepted Episcopal materials and elsewhere. The proposed liturgical plan is given to the rector for approval.

The LitPlan Team also takes time as needed to discuss larger issues around liturgy, (such as outdoor worship, timing of services, participation of children etc) and make recommendations to the staff on these topics. We also spend some time each season in study, so that we are all growing in our knowledge and practice of liturgy. Study topics this year included the Liturgical calendar, use of expansive language, understanding rituals, and an introduction to the filioque clause in the Nicene Creed

During 2025 the team consisted of many voices, and included staff members Maggie Howe, David Lim, Alec Watson, Chris Lilley, Kate Maxwell, and Margaret Thor, and parishioners Jackie Danda, Katheryn Schneider, Mark Sears, Stephanie Sulentic, and Melissa Thayer, led by Tony Angelo. Many thanks to the team for the time and prayer put into shaping the vibrant Liturgies we experience each Eucharist.

We are always happy to welcome new members in this group, so please contact Tony Angelo or Kate Maxwell if you are interested in hearing more!

Tony Angelo
Convenor, Liturgy Planning Team



Pastoral Ministry

Pastoral care is an essential ministry of the Church. We are present with one another in times of joy and grief, celebration and hardship. Much of the pastoral care in the congregation takes place informally, with parishioners taking care of one another in small and large ways.

There are also some members of the community who are called to this ministry in a particular way, and are available to walk alongside others in a more formal capacity. The clergy are among these, as are lay members of the congregation.

Community of Hope International is an Episcopal non-profit with the mission to prepare lay persons for the work of pastoral ministry. St John's has been a designated COHI Center since 2020. In 2024, St John's collaborated with St Mark's Minneapolis in sponsoring a Community of Hope training. The training topics

range from Benedictine spirituality and meditation to listening skills and how to initiate and process a pastoral encounter. We hope to offer another training in the near future.

Four members of St John's have completed Community of Hope training and have been commissioned as Lay Pastoral Ministers at St John's: Helen Gehrenbeck, Kathy Peterson, Avis Watkins and Barb Mahoney.

The ministries of the Pastoral Ministers vary; they visit parishioners at home, make phone calls, write cards, serve as Eucharistic Visitors, and visit residents at Cerenity. They also serve in various ways outside the walls of the parish.

Anyone interested in more information about the Community of Hope training or other pastoral ministry opportunities or needs is encouraged to contact Kate Maxwell (kate@stjohnwilderness.org).

Kate Maxwell, OSB

Adult Formation

In 2025, Adult Formation provided many opportunities for adult learning and enrichment: Bible studies, book groups, occasional Sunday morning Adult forums at 9:00 and 11:00,and retreats for both women and men were among the offerings.

CONNECT groups, which are small groups organized around a theme or activity and led by members of the congregation, were offered as well. Groups included a Bible Book Club, Sacred Reckonings, a Cookbook group, and Sacred Rhythms.

On Wilderness Wednesdays there were groups for both adults and younger members after the supper at 5:30. The adult offerings included a very well received series called "Our Neighbors' Faith" presented by representatives of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Orthodoxy.

The Path Ahead, a 6 session course about spirituality and purpose in the later part of life, was offered in the summer. Being With, a 10 session course exploring Christian life and faith, took place in the fall. Both were well received.

The 2025-2026 Adult Formation Team includes Nick Howe, Janet Dieterich, Gracia Cooper, Hugh McTavish, Molly Donovan, Emily Brunner and Kate Maxwell.

If you are interested in Adult Formation and want to learn more about the work of the Team, please contact Kate Maxwell or Emily Brunner.

Kate Maxwell, OSB

Finance Committee Report

The 2025 Financial Committee members are Deacon Margaret Thor, Father Art Hancock, Finance Coordinator Maureen Vruno, Treasurer Barry Kostyk, Senior Warden Jim DeMay, Junior Warden Mike Carpenter and John Allen – Chair.

The Finance committee is tasked with developing and managing the annual financial budget and creating financial policy. Each year the committee creates a budget that is manageable and supports the continual growth of our various ministries. Our income originates from three sources. Parishioner pledges and gifts make up 80%, 15% comes from our endowments and investments, and finally church use and unrestricted gifts account for 5%. Expenses can be broken down into three general categories. Staffing and payroll expenses account for 65%, building maintenance, office and insurance make up 15% while the remaining 20% supports our various ministries and outreach programs.

The 2025 Financial Budget reflected a shortfall of -$46,289 based on income of $457,000 and expenses of $503,289. We ended the year 12/31/2025 ahead of plan with a shortfall of -$23,419 with income of $475,711 and expenses of $499,130. SJW staff did a great job managing expenses which are $4,158 less than budgeted and parishioner generosity exceeded the plan by $18,711.

In 2025 we celebrated our 100-year Centennial anniversary with prayerful reflections, wonderful gatherings, a fresh coat of paint to our gathering space, root beer floats, and new SJW Swag. We fully funded and completed the remodeling to the parlor and updated a major appliance in the kitchen. Deacon Margaret and Maggie Howe secured grants that support our SJW Emergency Food shelf, and our Youth Ministry respectively. These grants allow us to become more involved in supporting the needs of our White Bear Lake community and growing our already fantastic youth programs. Thankfully we did not experience any unexpected financial events that negatively impacted the 2025 budget.

St John in the Wilderness is debt free. The Dedicated Account (SJW Balance Sheet) grew in 2025. The balance of all dedicated accounts on 1/1/2025 was $1,862,385 and our balance on 12/31/2025 was $1,943,651 an increase of $81,266 after distribution of roughly $68,500 to the SJW Operating Budget.

The Finance Committee, Wardens, and SJW Departments worked very hard on the 2026 Financial Plan. The budget projects total income of $464,000 expenses of $497,852, with a potential shortfall of -$33,852. We have factored in parishioners support through pledge and non-pledge income, positive endowment income and facility usage, and increases in payroll and insurance. We will work closely with all departments to have a balanced budget by the end of 2026.

I would like to extend my thanks to all of you for allowing me to serve as the Financial Chair. The Committee looks forward to serving this important function at St. John in the Wilderness. If anyone is interested in joining the Finance Committee, please reach out to me or the Wardens.

John Allen, Finance Committee Chair

2026 Financial Plan & 2025 Financial Report

	2025 Actual & 2026 Budget				
		2026	2025	2025	2025
		Plan	Actual	Budget	Plan
Income	Income	2026 Proposed	11/30/25	11/30/25	Vestry Approved
	Church & Grounds Maintenance				
549	Building Maintenance	$12,000.00	$16,594.57	$9,166.67	$10,000.00
	Utilities				
553	Natural Gas	$11,000.00	$9,326.42	$8,600.00	$9,000.00
554	Electricity	$6,000.00	$6,280.42	$6,500.00	$7,000.00
555	Water & Sewer	$1,100.00	$748.00	$900.00	$1,200.00
556	Sanitation/Disposal Services	$4,500.00	$4,397.35	$4,308.33	$4,700.00
	Utilities Total	$22,600.00	$20,752.19	$20,308.33	$21,900.00
	Insurance				
558	Insurance	$25,512.00	$15,126.00	$20,013.00	$20,013.00
	Office				
522	Office Supplies	$2,000.00	$1,768.85	$1,741.67	$1,900.00
523	Telephone & Internet	$5,500.00	$6,637.29	$6,325.00	$6,900.00
524	Postage	$1,000.00	$759.31	$825.00	$900.00
525	Legal and Accounting	$250.00	$0.00	$229.17	$250.00
526	Office Equipment & Computers	$4,000.00	$3,732.71	$2,245.83	$2,450.00
520	IT	$7,500.00	$7,181.14	$6,508.33	$7,100.00
527	Bank Fees	$2,000.00	$1,228.05	$1,375.00	$1,500.00
	Office Total	$22,250.00	$21,307.35	$19,250.00	$21,000.00
	Communications				
528	Digital & Print Media	$2,750.00	$2,774.59	$2,475.00	$2,700.00
	Music				
501	Music/Choir Supplies	$900.00	$1,077.41	$825.00	$900.00
505	Organ/Piano Maintenance	$1,000.00	$1,266.25	$916.67	$1,000.00
513	Supply Music/Special Music	$2,000.00	$1,700.00	$2,750.00	$3,000.00
	Music Totals	$3,900.00	$4,043.66	$4,491.67	$4,900.00
	Worship				
502	Altar Guild	$1,000.00	$347.70	$916.67	$1,000.00
506	Worship Supplies	$500.00	$285.70	$458.33	$500.00
507	Supply Clergy	$1,200.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
	Worship Total	$2,700.00	$633.40	$1,375.00	$1,500.00
	Stewardship				
529	Campaign, Fundraising, ACH, CC Fees/Mo	$1,250.00	$1,301.61	$1,833.33	$2,000.00
530	Heritage Society	$250.00	$0.00	$229.17	$250.00
	Stewardship Totals	$1,500.00	$1,301.61	$2,062.50	$2,250.00
	Rising Generations				
509	Children's Ministry	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$900.00
503	Youth Ministry Programs	$3,000.00	$1,800.26	$2,750.00	$900.00
511	Young Adults	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$900.00

	2025 Actual & 2026 Budget				
		2026	2025	2025	2025
		Plan	Actual	Budget	Plan
Income	Income	2026 Proposed	11/30/25	11/30/25	Vestry Approved
575	Child Care Supplies	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$300.00
	Rising Generations Totals	$3,000.00	$1,800.26	$2,750.00	$3,000.00
510	**Adult Christian Formation**	$3,250.00	$1,228.60	$1,512.50	$1,650.00
	Pastoral Care				
519	Clergy Hospitality	$600.00	$827.72	$641.67	$700.00
580	Pastoral Care Supplies/Expenses	$1,900.00	$250.00	$1,191.67	$1,300.00
	Pastoral Care Totals	$2,500.00	$1,077.72	$1,833.34	$2,000.00
	Fellowship				
518	Sunday Hospitality & Special Events	$4,000.00	$3,175.33	$3,666.67	$4,000.00
	Evangelism				
517	Welcoming	$700.00	$197.72	$641.67	$700.00
	Service				
515	Faith in Action (Formerly Outrreach)	$3,000.00	$500.00	$2,291.67	$2,500.00
	Service Total	$3,000.00	$500.00	$2,291.67	$2,500.00
	Total Expenses	**$497,852.70**	**$443,358.43**	**$456,945.19**	**$503,288.76**
	Total Income	**$464,000.00**	**$447,935.74**	**$424,400.00**	**$457,000.00**
	Total Expenses	**$497,852.70**	**$443,358.43**	**$456,945.19**	**$503,288.76**
	Total Income less Total Expenses	***-$33,852.70***	***$4,577.31***	***-$32,545.19***	***-$46,288.76***

St. John's 2025 Ministry Team

Vestry: Gretchen Brunner, Joanna Torgerson, Paul Stone Tom Hove,
Jen Miller, Nick Pearson, George Gorbatenko,
Sara Harker-Olson, Stephanie Sulentic
Clerk: Tracy Angelo
Treasurer: Barry Kostyk
Junior Warden: Mike Carpenter
Senior Warden: Jim DeMay
Nursery: Lorna Cessna, Megan Church
Sexton: Jake Malark
Financial Coordinator: Maureen Vruno |
maureen@stjohnwilderness.org
Music Minister: Alec Watson | alec@stjohnwilderness.org
Rising Generations Coordinator: Maggie Howe |
maggie@stjohnwilderness.org
Parish Coordinator: Carrie Thomas | carrie@stjohnwilderness.org
Intern: Chris Lilley | chris@stjohnwilderness.org
Deacon: The Rev. Margaret Thor | margaret@stjohnwilderness.org
Associate Priest: The Rev. Kate Maxwell, OSB |
kate@stjohnwilderness.org
Rector: The Rev. Arthur Hancock | art@stjohnwilderness.org