

# ANNUAL REPORT



# 2023



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 5 AGENDA**
- 7 OPENING LITURGY**
- 9 PREVIOUS MINUTES:**
  - 2023 Annual Meeting*
  - March 26, 2023 Special Meeting*
  - June 4, 2023 Special Meeting*
  - October 15, 2023 Special Meeting*
- 17 REPORT OF THE  
NOMINATING COMMITTEE**
- 18 REPORT OF THE  
PRESIDING BISHOP**
- 19 PASTOR’S REPORT**
- 21 PAROCHIAL REPORT**
- 22 PRESIDENT’S REPORT**
- 23 MUSIC MINISTRY**
- 25 WORSHIP & LITURGY**
- 26 FAITH FORMATION**
- 28 CEMETERY**
- 30 A FUTURE WITH HOPE:**
  - Building Update*
- 34 MINISTRY PARTNERS & IMPACT**
- 36 TREASURER’S REPORT**
- 37 2023 YEAR-END FUND REPORT**
- 38 2024 FINANCIAL PLAN FOR MISSION**

*This page intentionally left blank.*

## ANNUAL MEETING

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Albany, New York  
21 January 2024

- 1) **Call to Order**
- 2) **Opening Liturgy** (page 7)
- 3) **Roll Call & Determination of a Quorum**  
*1/3 avg. worship attendance (last 6 mos.) required (§C10.04) (min. 13 persons/voting members)*
- 4) **Appointment of Tellers (2)**
- 5) **Adoption of the Agenda**  
*Motion by the congregation council: To adopt the agenda of the annual meeting as written. No second is required; majority vote (show of hands) needed to pass.*
- 6) **Action on the Minutes of Previous Congregation Meetings**  
Annual Meeting: January 22, 2023 (page 9)  
Special Meeting: March 26, 2023 (page 14)  
Special Meeting: June 4, 2023 (page 15)  
Special Meeting: October 15, 2023 (page 16)  
*Motion by the congregation council: To approve the minutes of the January 22, 2023; March 26, 2023; June 4, 2023; and October 15, 2023 congregation meetings of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church as written. No second is required; majority vote (show of hands) needed to pass.*
- 7) **Elections: New Council Members**  
Report of the Nominating Committee (page 17)  
Nominations from the Floor  
*Motion: To close nominations for new council members. Second required; majority vote (show of hands) needed to pass.*  
Election  
*Motion (if there are no additional floor nominations): To approve the recommendation of the nominating committee to elect Staren Bielinski to a new three-year term on the congregation council, beginning in June 2024, and to re-elect Joy Pierle and Lindsay Stannard to a second three-year term, beginning in June 2024. Second required; majority vote (show of hands) needed to pass.*

*(continued from previous page)*

**8) Ministry Reports** *(page 18)*

*Motion by the congregation council: To accept with gratitude the ministry reports in this annual report booklet as written. No second is required; majority vote (show of hands) needed to pass.*

**9) 2024 Financial Plan for Mission** *(page 38)*

*Motion by the congregation council: To adopt the 2024 Financial Plan for Mission for St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church & Cemetery as presented and recommended by the congregation council. No second is required; majority vote (show of hands) needed to pass.*

**10) Announcements**

**11) Adjournment & Prayer**

*Motion: To adjourn the meeting. Second required; majority vote (show of hands) needed to pass.*

*All pray the Lord's Prayer together,  
in the language or translation of your heart.*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.

---

Padre nuestro que estás en el cielo, santificado sea tu nombre.  
Venga tu reino. Hágase tu voluntad en la tierra como en el cielo.

Danos hoy nuestro pan de cada día.

Perdona nuestras ofensas como también nosotros  
perdonamos a los que nos ofenden.

No nos dejes caer en tentación y líbranos del mal.

Porque tuyo es el reino, tuyo es el poder  
y tuya es la gloria, ahora y siempre. Amén.





# OPENING LITURGY

Recognizing that our faith is a living, busy, active and mighty thing, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with each of you.

**And also with you.**

Teach us to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Descend on our hearts, that we may love others in the ways Jesus loves us.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Empower us to be enthusiastic in pursuing your vision for our congregation.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Move us to engage issues in our community in Christlike ways, and to pursue deep and authentic relationships with those with whom we serve and partner.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Strengthen us to face the barriers we encounter in doing your work, learning to work with others amid disagreement.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Give us the ability to adapt to the cultural, economic and social changes that occur in the neighborhoods we serve.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Guide us to be a healthy congregation that learns from its failures as well as its successes and offers wisdom to others.

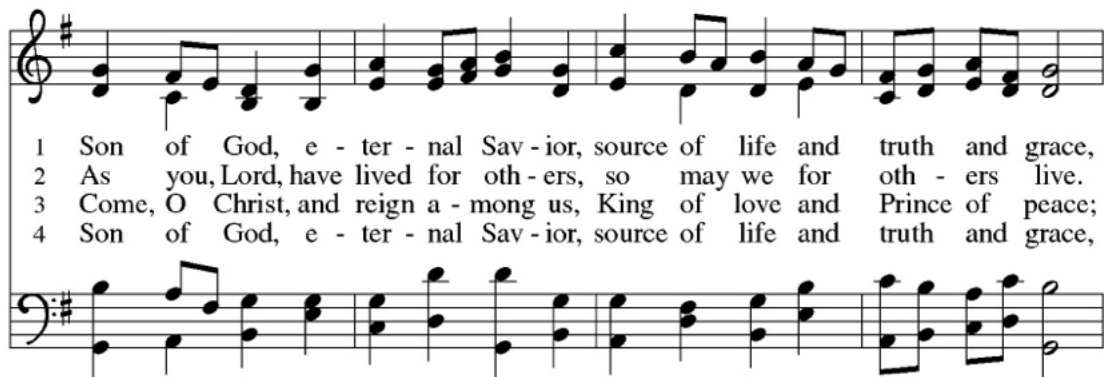
**Receive our prayer, O God.**

As we strive to become the church that we proclaim to be, raise up leaders who focus on the gospel of freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation as given to us through God's indescribable act of love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Renew us daily in our baptism, that we may discover vitality in our relationships with you, each other and those we serve in the world.

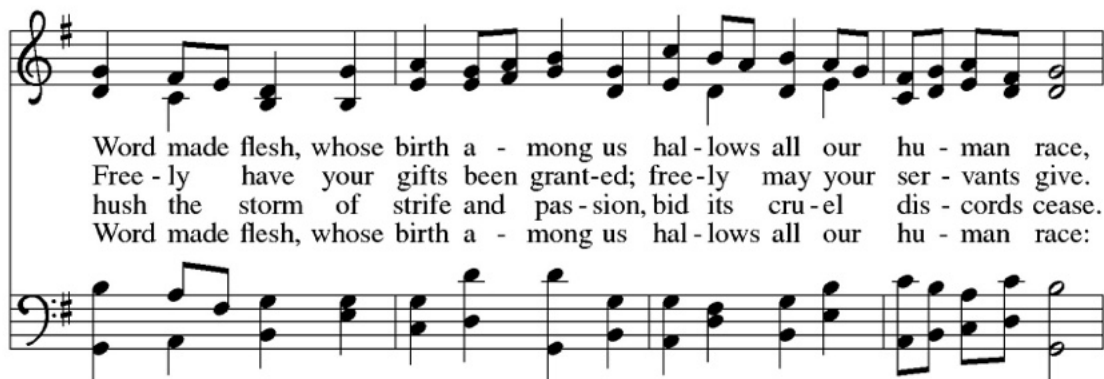
**Amen.**



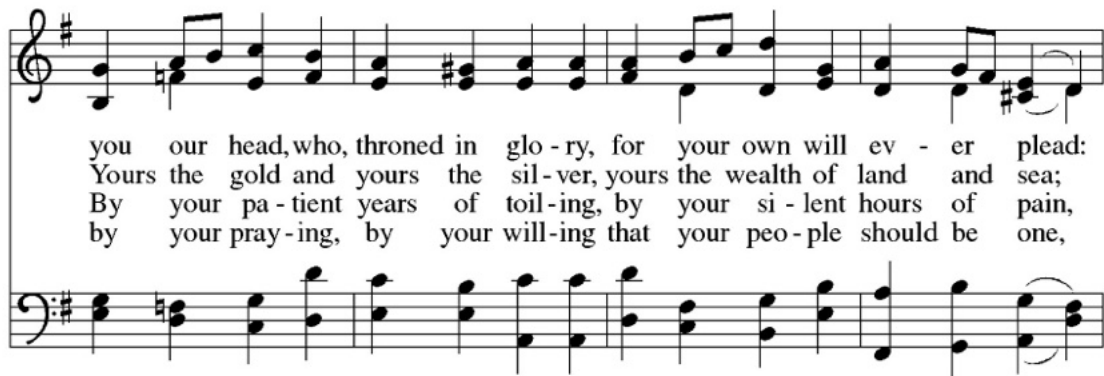
## Son of God, Eternal Savior



1 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,  
 2 As you, Lord, have lived for oth - ers, so may we for oth - ers live.  
 3 Come, O Christ, and reign a - mong us, King of love and Prince of peace;  
 4 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,



Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race,  
 Free - ly have your gifts been grant - ed; free - ly may your ser - vants give.  
 hush the storm of strife and pas - sion, bid its cru - el dis - cords cease.  
 Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race:



you our head, who, throned in glo - ry, for your own will ev - er plead:  
 Yours the gold and yours the sil - ver, yours the wealth of land and sea;  
 By your pa - tient years of toil - ing, by your si - lent hours of pain,  
 by your pray - ing, by your will - ing that your peo - ple should be one,



fill us with your love and pit - y, heal our wrong, and help our need.  
 we but stew - ards of your boun - ty held in sol - emn trust will be.  
 quench our fe - vered thirst of plea - sure, stem our self - ish greed of gain.  
 grant, oh, grant our hope's fru - i - tion: here on earth your will be done.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 655

Text: Somerset C. Lowry

Music: IN BABILONE, Oude en Nieuwe Hollandse Boerenlities en Contradansen, 1710;

arr. Julius Röntgen

Text and music are in the public domain. May be reproduced without restriction.



22 JANUARY 2023

**Call to Order**

The annual meeting of St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by council president Lindsay Stannard. The meeting was held in person at St John’s Lutheran Church on Sand Creek Road in Colonie, New York.

**Devotions**

Devotions were led by the Rev D. Lowell Chilton, transition pastor.

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken, and 31 voting members were present, thus satisfying the requirement for a quorum which was declared for the transaction of business.

**Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was presented to the congregation. Upon a motion made by Staren Bielinski and seconded by Karen Bielinski, the agenda was unanimously approved.

**Action of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the January 23, 2022 annual meeting were submitted to and reviewed by the congregation. Upon a motion made by Jerry Schwab and seconded by Joy Pierle, the minutes were unanimously approved.

**Report of the Nominating Committee**

The nominating committee reported that Emily Coppenrath has agreed to serve a three-year term on council. Lindsay Stannard entertained nominations from the floor; there were none. Upon a motion made by council (via the nominating committee) and seconded by Karen Bielinski, Emily Coppenrath was unanimously elected to a three-year term on council.

The full council, with term expirations, is as follows:

- Joy Pierle, 1st 3-year term expires May 31, 2024
- Gilda Fake, 2nd 3-year term expires May 31, 2024
- Paula Schwab, 2nd 3-year term expires May 31, 2024
- Lindsay Stannard, 1st 3-year term expires May 31, 2024
- Jackie Campbell, 1st 3-year term expires May 31, 2025



*(continued from previous page)*

- Mike Centanni, 1st 3-year term expires May 31, 2025
- Jerry Schwab, 2nd 3-year term expires May 31, 2025
- Emily Coppentrath, 1st 3-year term expires May 31, 2026

## **Annual Reports**

Lindsay Stannard reviewed the annual reports, as included in the annual report booklet, with the congregation, as follows:

### **Pastor's Report**

Lindsay Stannard spoke with Dean Ken Simurro to verify the absence of a pastor's report, due to St. John's not having a pastor, and Dean Simurro indicated it was okay.

Pastor Lowell Chilton, serving as St. John's transition pastor, indicated that he is available to assist part-time because he also is serving as pastor at First Lutheran Church. Should anyone need to speak with him on a pastoral topic, his phone number is available to contact him.

### **President's Report**

Lindsay Stannard began by thanking all those who have served or are serving on council, committees, and staff during the past year, as well as Pastor Jo Page, Pastor Judy Converse, the supply pastors, and the synodically authorized ministers. St. John's is a small but thriving congregation and will make things work as we move forward together.

Lindsay mentioned that the call committee has received a candidate's name from the synod. No further information could be given due to confidentiality; however, the call committee is moving forward with interviewing the candidate and will have more information to impart in the near future. The call committee is excited about the candidate, and further updates will be forthcoming.

Lindsay continued by indicating it is exciting to see the attendance at church services increasing, plus addressing the question of are we building or moving . . .



*(continued from previous page)*

. . . and stated all that would be on hold until a pastor is called for St. John's and being able to make decisions with that person regarding St John's moving forward.

**Director of Music**

Lindsay asked Dan Foster if he had any additions to his report as written in the report, and Dan indicated nothing further but that he is available to answer any questions. None were presented. Lindsay added that the choir was amazing and that having the organ up front is much better.

**Altar Guild**

Maggie Anderson submitted a report of all who volunteer and assist in set up and clean up. There is always need for additional volunteers and help, and training is available.

**Christian Education for Children**

Paige Pierle began by stating that the bibles the children received were being utilized; however, at times, teaching a more academic Christian class is challenging due to activities around distracting them. Paige has needed to create a different format of teaching lessons, thereby keeping their interest. Also looking forward to nice weather and being able to be bring the children outside again. It is difficult sitting through a service and then for Sunday school class. Paige thanked and mentioned several members who have given ideas (picking a bible verse), exploring the cemetery, and monuments, hoping to enable them not to be afraid of the cemetery, and also acting out a bible story or verse. Lindsay Stannard thanked Paige for all she does with the children and also indicated that if anyone had thoughts and ideas to reach out to Paige, who is willing to listen and try to incorporate into a lesson.

**Cemetery Report**

Karen Bielinski didn't have any further information to add but thanked all who helped with planting and caring for the upkeep. Mowing was increased, and there have not been any complaints with regards to overgrowth. Lindsay Stannard did mention repaving of the cemetery road is being anticipated, and bids will be ascertained . . .



*(continued from previous page)*

. . . in hopes that rates are lower in the spring. A question was raised regarding the pet clean-up stations and number of bags. Jerry Schwab indicated that during nice weather, the stations are changed once a week; during the winter, it is every other week.

**Finance Committee**

Joy Pierle indicated the full report was in the booklet and that pledges were up this past year, which is helpful. Joy indicated that our endowment was down a million dollars, due in part to the stock market, and St. John’s would still be withdrawing monies to pay for our expenses. However, it is hoped that investments will again go up as the stock market stabilizes. Nevertheless, for St. John’s to do future improvements, monies will need to be taken out. A question was asked as to who our investors were, and Joy answered Fenimore has been our investors and that they meet with the council once a year to give an overview of investments and financial situation.

**Property Report**

Jerry Schwab indicated that several bids were being obtained, along with Mike Centanni, for refinishing the first garage to a more usable space, and that an additional stand-alone shed garage would be built for the cemetery equipment. Dan Foster did mention that he hopes there may also be space allotted for a cabinet for music in the refinished garage. No questions were raised. Lindsay Stannard continued the conversation to indicate that a work day in the spring is anticipated in order to spruce up the outside of the church (power washing) and some other TLC needed to the outside, to make the church more inviting.

**Unfinished Business**

*None*

**New Business**

Proposed 2023 budget is \$254,274. The expense budget was increased \$16,354 due to increases in salaries, transition/supply pastors, and other items . . .



*(continued from previous page)*

. . . Joy Pierle indicated that pledges increased \$12,082 compared to last year. However, to cover the 2023 expenses, we will need to withdraw approximately \$200,000 or more from our Fenimore investments. Joy continued to summarize our Fenimore investments are down one million from December 21, 2021.

Proposed cemetery budget for 2023 is \$52,102. Costs of burials, lots, and markers have increased.

Lindsay stated also that we budgeted monies for a pastor – estimated because we do not know what experience the pastor has, and the synod has guidelines for salaries for pastors, so we opted for the middle, thereby that amount may need to be altered. A question was raised by Pastor Lowell Chilton regarding budgeting moving expenses, and we tabled that because we do not know as yet.

A motion to approve the proposed church and cemetery budgets was made by Karen Bielinski and seconded by Ethan Coppenrath, which was unanimously approved.

**Announcements**

Lindsay Stannard again thanked the church council for the busy year of meetings and welcomed Emily Coppenrath to council.

**Adjournment**

Lindsay Stannard made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Staren Bielinski, and unanimously approved. The meeting closed with the Lord’s Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Paula Schwab, assistant secretary





## **Call to Order**

The special meeting of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church was called to order at 10:47 a.m. by church council president Lindsay Stannard. The meeting was held in person at St John's Lutheran Church on Sand Creek Road in Colonie, New York.

## **Roll Call**

A roll call was taken, and with a quorum of voting members present, satisfying the requirement, the meeting continued.

## **Adoption of the Agenda**

Lindsay Stannard indicated there was one item on the agenda and made the motion, on behalf of the church council, to call Pastor Josh Evans to be the next pastor of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. The motion was seconded by Staren Bielinski.

The congregation was given a period of discussion and time to ask Pastor Josh Evans questions. No pertinent questions were asked, and Pastor Evans was dismissed for the vote.

The congregation was then given the opportunity to ask questions of the church council and/or Julie Grindle, our Upstate New York Synod representative. Upon no questions or further discussion, Staren and Karen Bielinski handed out the ballots to the congregation.

With the counting of the ballots completed by Lindsay Stannard, Karen Bielinski, and Julie Grindle, and the vote being overwhelmingly favorable, Lindsay Stannard asked Pastor Josh Evans if he would accept the call. Pastor Evans indicated he would be grateful to accept the call and looked forward to beginning and getting to know the members of St. John's. Lindsay further indicated that Pastor Evans will begin his call on April 1, 2023.

## **Adjournment**

Lindsay Stannard made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Staren Bielinski, and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,  
Paula Schwab, assistant secretary



# MINUTES | JUNE 4, 2023 SPECIAL MEETING

## **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Lindsay Stannard at 10:56 a.m.

## **Agenda Item**

Lindsay Stannard explained the reason for this meeting was to approve the upgrades to our Mahoney Alarms security system. These upgrades include four new cameras around the perimeter of the chapel building, video monitoring and recording, and a panic button. The total cost is \$5,548. Discussion followed, as well as questions that were answered.

Ethan Coppenrath made a motion to approve the upgrades, seconded by Thaisa Beach. The motion was carried by a vote of 25-1.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gilda Fake, secretary



**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Lindsay Stannard at 10:55 a.m. Pastor Josh Evans led the congregation in prayer.

**Determination of a Quorum**

Lindsay Stannard stated that a quorum had been met and continued on with the agenda.

**Adoption of the Agenda**

There were two items on the agenda: 1) approval of the updated RIC welcome statement; and 2) approval of the new building project. Lindsay Stannard made a motion to accept the agenda as written, seconded by Karen Seiz. The motion was carried unanimously.

**Approval of Updated RIC Welcome Statement**

The congregation council made a motion for final approval of St. John’s updated RIC welcome statement, as approved for provisional use at the May council meeting and introduced to the congregation in the June newsletter. No second was needed, but the motion was open for discussion. There was no discussion from the floor, and the motion was carried unanimously.

**Approval of New Building Project**

The congregation council made a motion for approval to initiate the construction of a new church building located on the grounds of St. John’s Cemetery, including approval of funding for this project. No second was needed. The motion was open for discussion.

There was much discussion from the floor on initial financing, building design, and long-term financing. A handout explaining the cost of new construction versus renovating the current chapel space was provided. After much discussion, the motion was carried by a vote of 16-5.

**Adjournment**

Lindsay Stannard made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Karen Seiz. The meeting was adjourned at 11:21 a.m., and Pastor Josh Evans led us in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gilda Fake, secretary



The nominating committee recommends for election . . .

**Staren Bielinski**

. . . to a new three-year term, beginning in June 2024, and . . .

**Joy Pierle + Lindsay Stannard**

. . . to a second three-year term, ending in May 2027.

We give thanks for the ministry of  
**OUTGOING** council members . . .

**Jackie Campbell\***  
**Mike Centanni\***  
**Gilda Fake**  
**Paula Schwab**

. . . whose terms conclude  
in May 2024.

*\*ending term one year early*

We are grateful for the ministry of  
**CONTINUING** council members . . .

**Emily Coppentrath**  
*(term ends May 2026\*)*  
**Jerry Schwab**  
*(term ends May 2025^)*

*\*eligible for re-election  
^not eligible for re-election*





A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP  
ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

Over the past year we have continued to experience changes in the world around us. Even as our church finds ways to adapt to this changing world, we find hope in the unchanging and always present promise of God’s love through Jesus Christ. We change and adapt not to conform to the world but because we believe that the gift of God’s Son is for the world, and that our congregations and worshiping communities are places to gather and be sent into the world, where we will tell the story of God’s love in word and deed.

The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the churchwide organization provide ways for the church to move beyond the boundaries of structures and geography and to share God’s love with people in our neighborhoods, our cities, our country and beyond. We engage in this ministry knowing that our church walks by faith, trusting in God’s promise in the gospel, and that we exist by and for the proclamation of this gospel word. In John 15:5, Jesus reminds us, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” We are connected by the promise that we do all through Christ and can do nothing apart from him.

God gives the Holy Spirit, who uses gospel proclamation — in preaching and sacraments, in forgiveness and in healing conversations — to create and sustain this faith. Just as we rely on God to sustain our faith, we rely on each other to sustain the ministries that offer God’s love to the world. Through your generosity to each expression

of this church — your congregation, your synod and your churchwide organization — you add to our collective voice proclaiming God’s love for all.

I am grateful for your generosity over this last year. My gratitude spreads far beyond your generous financial gifts. You’ve shared your gifts of time through countless hours of volunteering, serving and accompanying. You’ve shared the gifts of your voices as we’ve tried to discover and learn how God is calling us to be the church now and into the future. And, finally, dear church, you have shared the gift of the realness of God’s love with the world around you. Be well, dear church, and stand steadfast in the promise of God’s love and grace as you take that promise with you into the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton".

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

---

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” —John 15:5

---



# PASTOR'S REPORT

*The best is yet to come.*

– Frank Sinatra

*When the person in charge tasted the water that had become wine . . . that person called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.*

– John 2:9-11

Siblings in Christ,

For the past several years, I have followed a pattern in my annual pastor's reports that I borrow from a colleague from my first call congregation. It's a pattern that I continue to find helpful to recognize God's presence in the good stuff we're **grateful for**, the hard stuff we're **troubled by**, and the hoped-for stuff we're **praying for**.

Grateful for ... **partnership**. Not quite a full year ago, I packed up my car, drove halfway across the country from Chicago to Albany, and preached and presided for what I jokingly call my "audition" at St. John's on the Fifth Sunday in Lent. That same day, you called me to be your next pastor, and by April 1 – the eve of Holy Week – I started this new ministry with you. I am grateful for the warm welcome of the entire St. John's community and for your **partnership** from those early days on. Thank you for making me feel at home in a new city and in a new congregation, and thank you for your openness to try *new things* together.

Ministry is never something that can be done in a silo. It requires the buy-in of all of us working – **partnering** – together ... council leaders, call committee members, worship volunteers, and staff ... Sunday School kids and seniors, old-timers and newcomers, retired and working ... and *everyone* in between. **YOU** (yes, you) make St. John's happen – every Sunday, every Monday-Friday, every day of the year. **Thank YOU!**

Troubled by ... **uncertainty**. What will 2024 bring? For our world as nations war? For our country on the cusp of a national election? For our congregation as we embark on a exciting and hope-filled – *and* risky and scary – new building project? For our families and loved ones and all the *stuff* closer to home?



*(continued from previous page)*

There's a lot of *unknown* and *uncertainty*, and more *questions* than answers. Living in that discomfort and tension doesn't *feel* awesome. But the gift of being a part of a *community* of faith like St. John's means we don't have to walk through uncertain times alone. In the words of the hymn:

*We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord;  
trusting in his holy word, he's never failed us yet.  
Oh, can't turn around, we've come this far by faith.*

Praying for ... **good energy**. St. John's has come this far by faith: from Central Avenue to Sand Creek Road, through a pandemic, and to the other side of a pastoral transition. I am *still* in the last weeks of year *one* in this call, and I am *already* looking forward to starting year *two* – hopefully the first of *many* – with you.

I am praying for a strong and vibrant 2024, as we invest in a new year of meaningful liturgy, thoughtful and relevant preaching and Christian education, sacred and inspiring music, impactful service and outreach, and intentional collaboration. I am praying that, as our new building project takes shape (more on that on **page 30** in this booklet), we continue to dream big about who we are and what we're called to do for the sake of the gospel and for the well-being of our neighbors.

I am praying for the continued partnership and support of this community of faith, that our witness to the extravagantly inclusive *good news of great joy for all people* might be so contagious and energetic that we outgrow our new sanctuary – before we even break ground.

Faithfully,  
The Rev. Josh Evans, pastor

*Thus says the Lord,  
"I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth;  
do you not perceive it?"*

– Isaiah 43:19





**ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP**

Confirmed **88**

Baptized **14**

Active Non-Members **15**  
& Associate Members

**INACTIVE MEMBERS 119**



**OFFICIAL PASTORAL ACTS**

**Funerals**

Evelyn Lecuyer\* + 31 July 2023

Raymond Fred Heitzman\* + 16 December 2023

Ann C. Monthie\* + 4 January 2024

*\*denotes non-member*

**First Communion**

Makayla Savage + 25 June 2023



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear members of St. John's,

As I reflect on the year, I want to express my gratitude to the St. John's church family. Thank you for your continued faith and stewardship in an ever-changing world!

The year began with the continued hard work of the call committee. Following interviews by the call committee and church council, it was recommended that the congregation call Pastor Josh Evans. On March 26, 2023, a special congregation meeting was held, and St. John's voted to call our new pastor! Thank you to all members of the call committee – Thaisa Beach, Karen Bielinski, Reggie Jakubec, Jerry & Paula Schwab, and Jenny Szesnat – for your hard work and faithful discernment.

Pastor Josh got off to a running start and joined us during Holy Week! Thank you, Pastor Josh, for joining the St. John's church family. And thank you, St. John's church family, for welcoming Pastor Josh. I look forward to our future together!

A special congregation meeting was also held on October 15, 2023, to discern the development options of our Sand Creek campus. Following the recommendation of St. John's council, the congregation voted to initiate the construction of a new church building located on the grounds of St. John's Cemetery, including approval of funding for the project.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the staff of St. John's – your commitment and dedication to St. John's is evident in the work that you do. Thank you to members of church council – your commitment to St. John's is appreciated!

I am optimistic about the future of St. John's and the opportunities that await us. The church council will continue to work hard on identifying and understanding the needs of the congregation, the community, and the larger church. Many thanks to all the members of St. John's for your kindness, care, and commitment.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

Faithfully,  
Lindsay Stannard, president



# MUSIC MINISTRY

Dear congregation,

It's been a lovely year for our music ministry! Our newest chorister, mezzo-soprano Gabrielle San Roman, is a graduate of my alma mater, Westminster Choir College, where she earned a bachelors of science in music education – she's highly trained in music and lovely to work with – we're thrilled she moved to our area.

Our educational mission is something for which we can truly rejoice. We will expand when we have more space, for herein we have a golden opportunity to grow the church with many families – with the young singers we will train, and through our Academy for Strings partners Jamecyn Morey, concertmaster of the Albany Symphony, and her husband David Bebe, educational director of the Empire State Youth Orchestra – it's remarkable that we have so much musical talent focused around our small church.

You'll recall that a few years ago, with Alec Hicks' excellent mentorship, Avery Heaney, who started as a junior chorister, not only graduated to full chorister but grew into one of the finest tenors in the area. We continue this program with our two junior choristers from Union College: Chloë Metcalfe and Thomas Raimo.

We've known our student Mikayla Malenfant since she was in Sabrina's sixth grade chorus. Now an 18 year old senior in high school, she has just been accepted into the prestigious Crane School of Music of SUNY Potsdam. Her time in choir continues to be a hugely beneficial mutual relationship: we have another fine young singer; she receives extraordinary experience in advanced chorale techniques as she sight-reads new sacred repertoire every week along and gains additional instruction in music history and theory. The choir has taken her under their wings, most especially Abigail Luther who is her mentor, her extra teacher, and ideal soprano role model. It's been an incredible boost for Mikayla to sing with us as she prepares to embark upon this career. Her mother Janet has found a church, and we hope Mikayla is back often during her college studies and beyond.

Beyond church choir, our singers are thriving; they make excellent 'ambassadors' for St. John's in the wider community as they sing solos, direct, and teach.

Ours is a sung faith, and we continue to be enormously blessed by young people who are energetic, enthusiastic, and highly educated in music; who understand the importance of leading worship music for their congregation; and who are committed to the mission of the church.

In Christ,  
Dan Foster, director of music





### OUR MISSION

#### WORSHIP

The Collegium seeks younger professional musicians to Saint John's to take part in worship by leading sacred music – to glorify God and to enrich the experience for all. To increase participation, the visibility of our mission, attendance, and outreach.

#### LEARNING

The Collegium seeks to share our rich tradition of sacred music with even younger singers. With the talents and high-level training of students and professionals, to better share the range, depth, and remarkable beauty of sacred music with our congregation.

#### SERVICE & WITNESS

The Collegium provides a service to our community by creating an opportunity for singers to support their art financially in a way that glorifies God and enriches worship.



### OUR MEMBERS

**Olivia Faure**  
mezzo-soprano,  
founding member

**Kris Græsser**  
baritone, full-chorister

**Avery Heaney**  
tenor, full-chorister

**Alec Hicks**  
tenor, full-chorister

**Abigail Luther**  
soprano, full-chorister

**Mikayla Malenfant**  
soprano, choral-apprentice

**Chloë Metcalfe**  
soprano, junior-chorister

**William Peltz Smalley**  
bass, violin, full-chorister  
*(when he's home)*

**Thomas Raimo**  
baritone, junior-chorister

**Jilian Reilly**  
mezzo-soprano, full-chorister

**Gabrielle San Roman**  
mezzo-soprano, full-chorister

**Daniel White**  
baritone, assistant organist,  
founding member



## ALTAR GUILD

Those who served on altar guild include Maggie Anderson, Jackie Campbell, Diane & Kelly Conley, Linda Davis, Gilda Fake, and Paula Schwab. The duties of the altar guild are varied and include the following: Set up and clean up for communion and baptismal liturgies, deliver flowers, change paraments, launder and mend linens, clean and fill candlesticks and candelabra, polish silver, and order supplies. We also decorate the church at Christmas and Easter with seasonal plants and provide palms on Palm Sunday.

We are grateful to those who delivered altar flowers this year, including Maggie Anderson, Thaisa Beach, Karen Bielinski, Mike & Sheryl Centanni, Gilda Fake, Paula & Jerry Schwab, Lindsay Stannard, Jenny Szesnat, and Judy Szesnat. Our hospitalized, homebound, and bereaved members greatly appreciate the thoughtfulness and kind and caring gestures of their St. John's family.

This year, we began communing again with the common cup (wine), in addition to individual cups of wine and grape juice cups.

Being on the altar guild is an important commitment, and we are grateful for everyone who gives their time to serve.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maggie Anderson



## THANK YOU

*to all who serve in worship!*

### ASSISTING MINISTERS

Karen Bielinski, Paula Schwab, & Lindsay Stannard

### READERS

Thaisa Beach, Karen Bielinski, Avery Heaney, Melissa Savage, & Lindsay Stannard

### COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

Karen Bielinski, Gilda Fake, Joy Pierle, Melissa Savage, Paula Schwab, & Lindsay Stannard

### BREAD BAKERS

Maggie Anderson, Karen Bielinski, & Pastor Josh Evans

### USHERS

Freddy Boyzer & Kelly Conley

### COFFEE HOUR HOSPITALITY

Barbara Ableman, Maggie Anderson, Karen Bielinski, Jackie Campbell, Linda Davis, Gilda Fake, Ruth Klee, Joy Pierle, Karen Seiz, & Judy Szensnat

### LIVESTREAM

Shea Stannard

### ACOLYTES, CRUCIFERS, & BOOK BEARERS

St. John's Sunday School Students



## SUNDAY SCHOOL

We currently have 12 youth in our Sunday School program. We did not meet every week in 2023 but a few times a month. Our lessons typically consist of me reading a bible story while the students have a snack. We then act out the story, as they are anxious to move their bodies after sitting most of the morning. We sometimes complete an associated worksheet or craft.

In addition to our lessons, we have participated in the following activities in 2023:

- **First Communion Preparation Saturday** We had one student making her first communion in 2023. To prepare for that, Pastor Evans organized an event on a Saturday afternoon, during which the students learned about communion through stories, discussion, crafts, and food. After having lunch together, the students each made a loaf of bread, which we as a congregation use during communion. They engaged in discussion following a story Pastor Evans read about Communion. The students finished the afternoon by painting their own communion chalices (wine glasses). About ten students and their families attended this event.
- **Church Clean-Up** Sunday School students assisted the congregation with cleaning the outside of the church by planting flowers in the spring.
- **CROP Hunger Walk** Students participated in Albany's annual CROP walk, organized by Karen Bielinski.
- **Advent Fest** Pastor Evans organized our church's first annual Advent Fest, where students and other congregation members decorated the Christmas tree, created Christmas crafts, and decorated Christmas cookies baked by Paula Schwab and Karen Bielinski.
- **Worship Participation** Pastor Evans taught our students about various roles they can have during worship service. We spent a day learning these responsibilities and practicing them. A schedule was created so the students are aware of the roles for which they are responsible on a particular Sunday. These roles include acolytes, book bearer, and crucifer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Paige Pierle, Sunday School teacher



## ADULT EDUCATION

During the past year, we have experimented with several new initiatives for adult faith formation.

Over the summer months, we promoted **Thursday Night Reads**, a monthly Zoom-based book club hosted by First Lutheran Church. The group continues to meet, and future opportunities will continue to be shared.

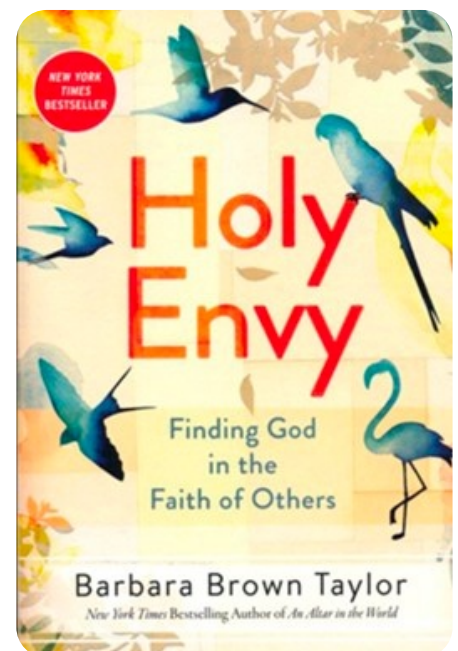
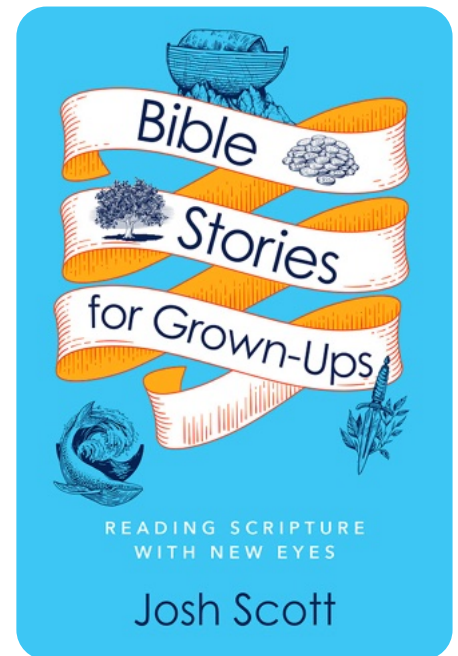
Beginning in the fall, a **Bible Study** group was organized. The original plan was to offer a morning group in-person, followed by a brief spoken eucharist, and an evening group on Zoom, followed by compline (night prayer). With minimal morning attendance, both groups soon merged into the evening Zoom session and began the book and video-based series *Bible Stories for Grown-Ups*. While interest was piqued, availability and scheduling proved difficult. By late fall, the evening group came to a close, with the possibility of resuming in the spring on a more agreeable day and time.

In October, a session of **Brewed Theology** was offered around the topic of *listening*. A small group of six met at BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse on Wolf Road. Future sessions will be considered at a new venue more conducive to conversation.

Running an adult education hour on Sunday mornings would certainly be an appealing option, but our present space limitations are challenging. With choir rehearsal just before the liturgy nearly every week and Sunday School often immediately following, there is no good place or regular time to meet. We are planning to explore the possibility of sharing a post-liturgy education hour with Sunday School by alternating Sundays, with the hope of attracting more people who are already present for worship and coffee hour (versus a midweek time).

Of course, with the prospect of a new building comes greater flexibility for ministry, especially faith formation, which is one of the things I'm looking forward to the most in St. John's future. Ideas for adult faith formation and education are always welcome as well.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Rev. Josh Evans, pastor





# CEMETERY

St. John's is grateful for the continued service of Robert Curtis, cemetery superintendent, who handles sales, digging, and attends to the many details required by funeral home directors. He and his crew also walk the grounds periodically and provide needed repairs to broken headstones and fencing, as well as tree and root maintenance. Thanks also to George and Nick Klapp who donated their time this past year to trim trees along the drives and handle other maintenance matters. Please let me know if there is anything you notice that needs attention so we may make arrangements to have the work completed.

Karen Bielinski met with Howard Hasenbein and other members from Holy Spirit's cemetery committee in the spring and summer to discuss possible collaboration opportunities within the cluster for cemetery-related matters. This work is ongoing.

The additional mowing approved by council in 2022 was appreciated by all and kept complaints to a minimum for the year. Thank you to all who participated in the exterior work day at the chapel, especially to Mike Centanni who donated his power washer and, with the excellent help of Shea Stannard, power washed the entire chapel building, not to mention the Sunday School students who scrubbed mold and mildew off low sections of the building and completed all the spring plantings under the guidance of Paige Pierle. Further appreciation is extended to Maggie Anderson, Gilda Fake, and Paula & Jerry Schwab for their added beautification efforts, flag vigil, and pet waste removal, and to Pastor Josh Evans for his interior clean-out and reorganization of all things church and cemetery! We sincerely appreciate your continued, watchful care of our church home and cemetery.

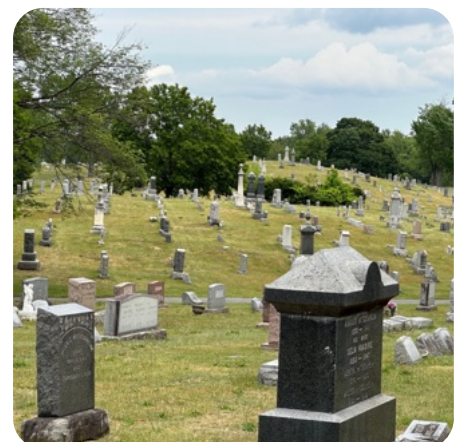
Suggestions for additional cemetery maintenance projects or improvements are welcome.

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Bielinski, cemetery committee chair



## 2023 STATISTICAL REPORT SUMMARY

**18 Full Burials**  
**11 Cremations**  
**5 Lots Sold**  
**\$3405 Cost of Foundations Constructed**







Dear congregation,

I'm excited that we're at last moving forward to build a new sanctuary and social hall. At this point in the process, I'm developing the plan with our factory partner, Sand Creek Post & Beam. The basic outline is as we've discussed in congregational meetings: two post & beam barns – one for the sanctuary, one for everything else – connected by a breezeway, surrounding a central courtyard. Now we must get every possible detail designed in CAD so we can submit highly detailed, printed plans to the town. We have several key partners lined up:

- ABD Engineers & Surveyors – all the plans for site preparation and layout will continue from where we left off after our previous surveys.
- Dan Minbiole, framing building envelope – Dan will lead his small team to assemble the building when the pieces arrive by truck from Sand Creek Post & Beam.
- Comfort Solutions, Doug Gibson HVAC – Doug is a local expert with heating and cooling.

Sand Creek holds fifty-state engineering licenses. They will help us determine, for example, a concrete company to pour the foundation when the time is right. They will work with us and ABD Engineers to present our project and help get it approved. The timeline will depend on many moving pieces, including but not limited to: blueprint, draft 1; survey; presentation; preliminary approval; blueprint, draft 2; final approval; factory construction of the building envelope; foundation; utilities; interior plumbing and electric; interior finishing, etc.

Much of the work going on right now will determine how much space and aesthetic we can afford. My goal is to do everything possible to keep the project on budget while designing the most beautiful, useful, and sustainable space possible for all imaginable activities, and the versatility for activities we haven't yet imagined. On the next few pages, I include some inspirational renderings, which I made to share with you and our design and construction partners.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dan Foster, project lead, new campus project





# BIRDSEYE VIEW OF THE CAMPUS (representative)







**SANCTUARY  
POSSIBLE INTERIOR AESTHETIC**





**NORTH CHAPEL  
POSSIBLE INTERIOR AESTHETIC**

# MINISTRY PARTNERS & IMPACT

## AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (2023)

On Site **38**  
Online **8\***

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

Active Kids **12**



## BENEVOLENCE SUPPORT

Capital Area **\$250**

Council of Churches

Upstate **\$8612**

New York Synod

Hudson Mohawk **\$1000**

Conference

Cornerstone **\$901**

Campus Ministry

NYS Council **\$300**

of Churches

ReconcilingWorks **\$500**

Extraordinary

Lutheran Ministries^ **\$429**

ELCA

World Hunger **\$640**



Upstate New York Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



New York State  
Council Of Churches



*\*livestream beginning in April 2023*

*^one-time gift in honor of Pastor Josh Evans' installation*

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

*Made possible by a generous bequest from the estate of Harvey & Caroline Turner*

Albany **\$12,000**

Maritime Ministry

Capital Area **\$12,000**

Council of Churches

Capital District **\$12,000**

Latinos

Lutheran **\$12,000**

Disaster Response

Upstate **\$12,000**

New York Synod



## ALBANY LUTHERANS TOGETHER

St. John's is a congregation of **Albany Lutherans Together** (previously known as the *Albany Lutheran Cluster*), an intentional partnership of the four Albany-area ELCA congregations, including **First Lutheran Church** (Albany/Pine Hills), **Good Shepherd Lutheran Church** (Loudonville), **Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit** (Albany/Delaware Avenue), and **St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church** (Colonie).

**Together we worship** – including special midweek liturgies for Advent & Lent and the Great Vigil of Easter – **and we give back to our community through regular outreach collections** – including the Schuyler Inn (Menands), St. John's/St. Ann's Food Pantry (South Albany), Things of My Very Own (Schenectady), Giffen Memorial and Delaware Community Schools (Albany), CACC Emergency Homeless Overflow Shelter (Albany), the Albany Maritime Ministry Christmas-at-Sea program, and Rehabilitation Support Services (Altamont).





# TREASURER'S REPORT

*The members of the finance team are:  
Joy Pierle (treasurer), Lindsay Stannard (president),  
& the Rev. Josh Evans (pastor)*

The finance team is responsible for preparing a proposed budget to be presented to the Congregation Council and the congregation at the annual meeting. The team also monitors the investments of the congregation and makes recommendations to the council regarding investments considering the mission of the congregation.

During 2023, many individuals assisted in the financial operations of the congregation. Our thanks go to the many individuals who counted the offering, posted pledge information, and generated the contribution statements; our congregation who mailed their offerings or put them in the offering plate at church; and Pastor Evans for exploring new ways to receive offerings and donations and revising the budget report. In September, we began to transition to Planning Center for online giving, and we will use Planning Center exclusively for all contributions going forward in 2024.

St. John's received \$600,000 from the Turners' estate in August 2023. After tithing \$60,000 to various organizations, the remaining \$540,000 has been invested in Certificates of Deposit.

Our congregation's endowment continues to be managed by Fenimore Asset Management. The balances of the funds have gone up a little during 2023. We are still withdrawing \$20,000 each month from the Capital Reserve Account to cover St. John's monthly expenses. We hope to lower the monthly withdrawal amount if our contributions and other income improve.

As treasurer, I handle the payroll, payment of all obligations, control the flow of funds to the and from the investment accounts, prepare the monthly and year-end reports for the finance team, the council, and for the annual congregation meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joy Pierle, treasurer





# 2023 YEAR-END FUND REPORT

FUND	BEGINNING BALANCE	INCOME	EXPENSE	ENDING BALANCE
General (Church) [1]	-\$504,526.08	\$1,419,369.44	\$297,736.35	\$617,107.01
Cemetery	\$96,701.05	\$80,562.06	\$52,607.23	\$124,655.88
Archives/ Anniversary	\$1,021.31	\$0.00	\$30.00	\$991.31
World Hunger	\$0.00	\$639.85	\$639.85	\$0.00
New Church Building	-\$3,910.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	-\$3,910.00
Outreach	\$9,060.00	\$692.78	\$1,091.52	\$8,661.26
Thrivent Choice	\$1,425.00	\$212.00	\$0.00	\$1,637.00
Chapel	\$10,023.21	\$0.00	\$1,387.00	\$8,636.21
Special Music [2]	-\$680.00	\$26,600.00	\$25,964.41	-\$44.41
Youth Special Events	\$154.78	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$154.78
Senior Citizens/ Coffee Hour	\$16,569.35	\$43.82	\$1,541.08	\$15,072.09
Adopt-a-Family [3]	\$478.83	\$448.62	\$927.45	\$0.00
Bequests [1]	\$514,930.65	\$0.00	\$514,930.65	\$0.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$141,248.10</b>	<b>\$1,528,568.57</b>	<b>\$896,855.54</b>	<b>\$772,961.13</b>

## NOTES

[1] General (Church) fund includes a one-time transfer from Bequests in 2023.

[2] Special Music includes \$25,000 from the annual church budget for the St. John's Collegium (choir), plus any special income received (such as honorariums for outside concerts).

[3] Adopt-a-Family fund (Christmas gift cards for Sacred Heart Outreach Center) will be eliminated in 2024 and consolidated into Outreach.

# 2024 FINANCIAL PLAN FOR MISSION CHURCH (PROPOSED)

	2021	2022	2023	2023	2024
	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET
Regular Contributions	\$88,531.00	\$60,093.00	\$64,350.00	\$59,513.77	\$58,100.00 [1]
Special Donations	\$2,074.00	\$1,150.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,118,285.65 [2]	\$1,200.00
Investment Income	\$101,161.00	\$241,261.00	\$189,974.00	\$241,570.02	\$204,021.00 [3]
TOTAL INCOME	\$191,766.00	\$302,504.00	\$255,524.00	\$1,419,369.44	\$263,321.00
Salaries & Benefits	\$167,917.00	\$159,404.00	\$186,449.00	\$154,834.72	\$201,011.00 [4]
Office & Administrative	\$22,959.00	\$26,692.00	\$28,700.00	\$45,019.06 [5]	\$26,000.00
Facilities & Maintenance	\$10,769.00	\$14,746.00	\$18,100.00	\$18,130.76	\$17,700.00
Worship & Formation	\$758.00	\$2,698.00	\$3,925.00	\$5,473.00	\$5,450.00
Benevolence & Other Support	\$14,642.00	\$12,791.00	\$15,100.00	\$72,178.81 [6]	\$13,160.00 [7]
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$217,045.00	\$216,331.00	\$252,274.00	\$295,636.35	\$263,321.00
Diff. Inc./Exp.	-\$25,279.00	\$86,173.00	\$3,250.00	\$1,123,733.09	\$0.00

**NOTES**

- [1] Includes \$48,473 in pledged contributions for FY2024
- [2] **2023 actual includes a transfer from Bequests (Fund 37) and \$600,000 from the Turner estate**
- [3] Includes est. \$16,910/month to balance FY2024 budget (down from \$20,000/month in FY2023)
- [4] **Includes 3.1% increase for all staff, based on synod recommendations, as well as \$15,000 for a new 3rd party bookkeeping service**
- [5] 2023 actual includes one-time call committee and pastoral relocation expenses, as well as (now terminated) pew storage unit
- [6] **2023 actual includes \$60,000 tithes of Turner estate**
- [7] Includes annual commitments to Capital Area Council of Churches, Upstate New York Synod, Hudson Mohawk Conference, Cornerstone Campus Ministry, NYS Council of Churches, and ReconcilingWorks, as well as Albany Lutherans Together and pastor's discretionary fund

# 2024 FINANCIAL PLAN FOR MISSION CEMETERY (PROPOSED)

	2021	2022	2023	2023	2024
	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET
Cemetery Income [1]	\$33,649.00	\$30,350.00	\$30,500.00	\$36,005.00	\$28,300.00
Investment Interest	\$34,291.00	\$43,181.00	\$21,602.00	\$44,557.06	\$32,150.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$67,940.00</b>	<b>\$73,531.00</b>	<b>\$52,102.00</b>	<b>\$80,562.06</b>	<b>\$60,450.00</b>
Equipment & Operating Expenses	\$12,195.00	\$15,089.00	\$19,550.00	\$20,530.16	\$26,920.00
Manager's Salary	\$28,624.00	\$30,782.00	\$31,552.00	\$31,552.07	\$32,530.00 [2]
Perpetual Care	\$855.00	\$665.00	\$1,000.00	\$525.00	\$1,000.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$41,674.00</b>	<b>\$46,536.00</b>	<b>\$52,102.00</b>	<b>\$52,607.23</b>	<b>\$60,450.00</b>
Diff. Inc./Exp.	\$26,266.00	\$26,995.00	\$0.00	\$27,954.83	\$0.00

**NOTES**

[1] Includes sale of lots, interments, foundations, and memorial markers

[2] Includes 3.1% increase, based on synod recommendations



### *Our Mission*

We worship God, serve faithfully, and reach out.



### *We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation.*

Trusting in the extravagant grace of God that sets us free, we affirm the sacred worth and dignity of our siblings in Christ – of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, racial and ethnic identities, ages, abilities, and socio-economic statuses.

We confess the church's complicity in systems that harm God's people, including homophobia and transphobia, sexism, racism and white supremacy, and ableism.

Together, as a community of Jesus followers, rooted in grace, we commit ourselves to the work of racial equity and anti-racism and to confronting and dismantling all systems of injustice and oppression in all we do and say.

### **Church Staff**

The Rev. Josh Evans, *pastor*  
pastorjosh@stjohnsalbany.org  
518.250.9098 (mobile)

Dan Foster, *director of music*  
danfoster@stjohnsalbany.org

Maggie Anderson, *parish secretary*  
parishsec@stjohnsalbany.org

### **St. John's Collegium**

Olivia Fauré, *mezzo-soprano*  
Dan Foster, *tenor*  
Kris Græsser, *baritone*  
Avery Heaney, *tenor*  
Alec Hicks, *tenor*  
Abigail Luther, *soprano*  
Mikayla Malenfant, *choral apprentice*  
Chloë Metcalfe, *soprano*  
Thomas Raimo, *baritone*  
Jilian Reilly, *mezzo-soprano*  
Gabrielle San Roman, *mezzo-soprano*  
Daniel White, *baritone*



### ***Land Acknowledgment***

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Mohican, Haudenosaunee, and Schaghticoke peoples, and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to acknowledge and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this land their home.