

# ST. MARY OF THE HILLS EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Reports for the Annual Parish Meeting

Sunday, August 28, 2022

(via In-person and Zoom)

# ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Annual Meeting Agenda

August 28, 2022

9:00 AM

**Join the meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87388300383?pwd=K3hQc2xoR0tvem44Q1Z3Zk1BcndsQT09>

**Passcode: smoth22**

Welcome and Call to Order

Opening Prayer

Appointment of Meeting Officers

Secretary

Parliamentarian

Approval of Minutes from August 2021 Annual Meeting\*

Treasurer's Report

Election of New Vestry Members\*

Rector's Report

Adjournment

**\*requires vote**

**St. Mary of the Hills, Blowing Rock, NC**

## **Annual Parish Meeting, August 29, 2021**

### **Via Video Conference**

The annual meeting of our parish was called to order at 5:04pm. A small group of church leaders gathered in the Sanctuary while other parish members joined via Zoom. Those present to lead the meeting from the church were Fr. Andrew Hege, Rector, Elizabeth Sudderth, Clerk, Amanda White, Treasurer, and Vestry Members Tim Silver, Senior Warden, and E.B. Springs

Fr. Andrew and Elizabeth verified that a quorum was in place for the meeting, as a total of 46 parish members were in attendance.

Fr. Andrew offered an opening prayer.

Fr. Andrew began the meeting with the appointment of meeting officers:

Secretary: Elizabeth Sudderth

Parliamentarian: E.B. Springs

The minutes of the 2020 annual meeting were presented for acceptance.

Leslie Billingsley made a motion with a second from Marjory Holder to approve the minutes.

No discussion followed; the approval of the 2020 annual meeting minutes was made by parish vote.

Amanda White shared the Treasurers report.

Amanda expressed her thanks to Joe Raulerson, Financial Secretary, for his great work. She also expressed thanks to the Finance committee chaired by Orian Carter. She noted one major project accomplished this year was the development of a Financial Policy manual.

She noted the Finance committee is currently reviewing the annual parish audit. They will send the audit report to the Vestry next month.

While Amanda noted what a strange, uncertain year this has been the parish has continued to support the church so wonderfully. She reported that plate offerings are up 58% over this time last year and 65% of this year's pledges have been paid thus far. Pledge payments as a whole are up \$20,000 over the same time last year. The Tour of Homes revenues are still being calculated, but so far approximately \$60,000 has been raised. The trust accounts have grown by 7.2% this year.

There were no questions for Amanda from the parish. Fr. Andrew expressed his thanks to Amanda for all her hard work.

Fr. Andrew summarized the process of discernment which has led to the election today of new Vestry members for the next 3 years.

Names were suggested for consideration. Those people were checked by Fr. Andrew to determine if they meet canonical qualifications for Vestry service. Then those persons participated in a process of prayerful discernment

to consider if Vestry service at this time is the best use of their talents in service of our parish family. Open nominations were sought from the congregation. Then, lots were drawn from a jar such as in Acts 1.

This prayerful, deliberate process led to the presentation of Buddy Fore, Leslie Billingsley, and Robert Finney as year-round candidates and Joe Doswell as the seasonal candidate.

Fr. Andrew asked if there were any additional nominations. There were none.

Greta Wilson made a motion with a second from Larry Jones that nominations be closed.

The motion was approved by parish vote.

Sterling Hutcheson made a motion with a second from Mike Austell that Buddy Fore, Leslie Billingsley, Robert Finney and Joe Doswell be elected to 3-year terms on the Vestry beginning on January 1, 2022.

The motion was approved by parish vote.

Fr. Andrew expressed his thanks to the outgoing Vestry members and to all those who offered their names for consideration as Vestry members.

Fr. Andrew shared his thoughts on the year past and where we are headed as a parish.

He again expressed this profound thanks to the Vestry, especially to the outgoing members. This Vestry is the group who interviewed him to serve as our rector and they will always hold a special place in his heart. He shared a special word of gratitude to the Wardens, Tim Silver and Doug Galke, who offer incredible wisdom to him. He expressed thanks to Amanda White who is great at working with him and the Vestry as Treasurer. He expressed thanks to Elizabeth Sudderth for her service as Clerk of the Vestry.

Fr. Andrew shared his deep thanks to all the staff; Greta Wilson, Bill Stroh, Jim Bumgardner, and Joe Raulerson. He expressed his profound gratitude for the service of Fr. Sam Tallman, Bishop Gary Gloster, and Fr. Rick Lawler. He is grateful to serve with each of them and deeply appreciates their great pastoral counsel.

Fr. Andrew noted that one month ago the plan had been to hold this meeting in person. However, that became unwise due to increased COVID numbers in the community. It serves as a reminder of our need for flexibility, grace, and humility.

Fr. Andrew reflected on where we have been in the last 2 years.

As we have looked back on an incredible 100 years of history in this place as the church has stood steadfast in these mountains, we have engaged in the tender work of evaluating where we are now and where we wish to go as a parish community; and how best to “widen the walls”.

Even during a global pandemic that has changed so much of our daily lives and our life as a parish family we have been steadfast in moving forward.

Fr. Andrew shared the theme of where he feels we are now: Following Jesus; Forming Disciples.

As Jesus called his disciples, he calls us as well. We are called to redouble our efforts in outreach. Our calling is to continue this work in the year ahead and prayerfully consider what it means to follow Jesus. There are many ways our parish is moving forward in areas of service.

The Outreach committee has taken as their mission: Allocation, Advocacy, and Awareness.

Fr. Andrew is forming a new pastoral care team. Many parish members have expressed a call to help in this effort. He looks forward to growing this team in the coming year.

As for forming disciples, Jesus calls us to “make disciples”. Ways to practice this include looking at how we offer hospitality in this place and recognizing we are a place of pilgrimage for visitors and residents alike. Fr. Andrew will reform the Hospitality team in the months ahead.

We must also remember we are called to evangelism; God’s story is ours to tell and share with others.

We are also called to lifelong Christian Formation. Our parish is showing a renewed commitment to this effort for all ages and stages of life.

We must not forget that prayer and worship are the first work of the church; worship of the Triune God. We must redouble our commitment to worship and reflect on who we are called to be in the year ahead.

Fr. Andrew reflected on one of the hymns today and how it fits God’s dream for us.

When morning gilds the skies, may Jesus Christ be praised. Another verse states: Let us join to Christ our loving King, all the ages long may Jesus Christ be praised.

Lynn Searfoss made a motion with a second from Sterling Hutcheson to adjourn the meeting at 5:37pm.

Fr. Andrew shared his greatest hope for next years Annual meeting-that it be held in person and that there will be coffee!

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Sudderth, Clerk of the Vestry

## **Vestry Nominees**

*(to serve terms beginning January 2023 through December 2025)*



**J. Michael Austell**

**(Year-round Member)**

**How long have you been connected to St. Mary of the Hills?**

Since October 2017

**In what areas of ministry are you involved?**

Outreach Committee, Lector, Usher, Men's Breakfast, The Listening Post at App State

**What excites you about serving on the Vestry at this time?**

Helping to plan and advance the Mission of St Mary of the Hills in and beyond the Blowing Rock Community.

**Favorite story from scripture?**

The Parable of the Good Samaritan



**Michelle Curry**

**(Year-round Member)**

**How long have you been connected to St. Mary of the Hills?**

26 years

**In what areas of ministry are you involved?**

Acolytes, Daughters of the King, Sunday School

**What excites you about serving on the Vestry at this time?**

Reinvigorating our youth outreach and ministry

**Favorite story from scripture?**

Luke 10:38-42 - The story of Mary and Martha. This scripture speaks to me from both perspectives.



## **Burton Naylor Mulford**

**(Seasonal Member)**

**How long have you been connected to St. Mary of the Hills?**

4 years

**In what areas of ministry are you involved?**

Would like to get more involved with the church needs

**What excites you about serving on the Vestry at this time?**

Opportunity to help the church grow its reach to the community.

**Favorite story from scripture?**

Parable of the Prodigal Son





## **Sue Sweeting**

**(Year-Round Member)**

**How long have you been connected to St. Mary of the Hills?**

6 years

**In what areas of ministry are you involved?**

Altar Guild member and Chair; Discernment Committee member and secretary, Ad Hoc Ground Committee member, Play Space funding co-chair

**What excites you about serving on the Vestry at this time?**

Working and helping St. Mary's church to accomplish their 5 year goals. Helping to devise ways to bring more families into our congregation

**Favorite story from scripture?**

The Good Samaritan

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### St. Mary of the Hills Annual Meeting August 28, 2022

	General Fund January 1 - July 31, 2022			2021
<b>Revenues</b>	<b>YTD Actual</b>	<b>YTD Budget</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Actual Y/E</b>
Plate Offerings	\$5,348.00	\$3,850.00	\$6,600.00	\$6,861.00
Pledge Payments	\$286,375.00	\$265,000.00	\$440,000.00	\$498,538.00
Non-Pledge Contributions	\$18,865.00	\$14,583.00	\$25,000.00	\$33,248.00
From Rest. Family/Adult	\$0.00	\$2,917.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00
Charitable Trust	\$13,000.00	\$7,583.00	\$13,000.00	\$12,000.00
Bank Interest	\$50.00	\$26.00	\$45.00	\$130.00
PPP Loan Forgiveness	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$51,030.00
Tour of Homes	\$94,282.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$68,000.00
<b>Total Revenue (as of 7/31)</b>	<b>\$417,920.00</b>	<b>\$293,960.00</b>	<b>\$489,645.00</b>	<b>\$669,807.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Giving	\$63,955.00	\$61,842.00	\$106,016.00	\$164,376.00
Programs	\$8,125.00	\$13,933.00	\$24,900.00	\$18,547.00
Personnel	\$174,206.00	\$189,194.00	\$325,262.00	\$295,223.00
Operations	\$61,531.00	\$49,975.00	\$86,015.00	\$68,680.00
Tour of Homes	\$10,985.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,726.00
<b>Total Expense (as of 7/31)</b>	<b>\$318,802.00</b>	<b>\$314,946.00</b>	<b>\$542,192.00</b>	<b>\$551,552.00</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$99,118.00</b>	<b>(\$20,986.00)</b>	<b>(\$52,547.00)</b>	<b>\$118,335.00</b>
<b>Cash on Hand 7/31/2022</b>				
Checking Account		\$365,602.00		
Money Market		\$147,197.00		
Tour of Homes Checking		\$85,465.00		
<b>Less Restricted Funds</b>		324,031.00	Includes ToH	
<b>Total Operating funds Available</b>		234,233.00		
<b>Total Pledge Amount</b>		<b>\$460,890.00</b>		
Paid to July 31		\$286,375.00		
Balance Due		\$174,515.00		
<b>Trusts 7/31/2022</b>				
Combined Trusts/Endows		<u>712,650.00</u>		

## FROM OUR RECTOR

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we gather this year for our Annual Meeting as a parish, this will be the first time that so many of us have been able to gather in the Parish Hall for this type of meeting since August 2019. The meeting will, however, still be available via Zoom. That reality sets much of the context for the story of God's faithfulness over the course of the past year and beyond.

Though COVID-19 remains present in our midst, the period of exile and isolation has faded, and we have been able to continue in-person worship and other gatherings, with few restrictions. We remain vigilant as this dreaded illness continues to afflict so many and give thanks for those who continue to serve on the front lines with the sick and suffering.

Emerging from this period of distancing, we have undertaken a number of new initiatives as a congregation while also not losing sight of many of long-held traditions.

The Tour of Homes returned to its in-person format in 2022, raising more than \$84,500 in funds to be distributed in grants to our non-profit partners across the High Country.

Work is beginning on the construction of a new play space on our grounds that will create a space of welcome and hospitality for our youngest parishioners and their families, along with the wider community.

Our staff has grown as the reach of our ministry expands. Lindsey Herring joined us in June of this year as our Christian Formation Coordinator and is already making a significant impact in our programming for all ages.

We kicked off a new program of planned giving, called 'Sustaining Grace', to support our mission and ministry now and for generations to come.

A new pastoral care team is forming as a sort of umbrella to support all the ministries and ways that we seek to care for and support one another amidst all life's seasons.

And, through it all, you, the members of this parish, have remained faithful in attending worship – proclaiming the new life of the risen Christ in scripture, sacrament, and song – faithful in study and fellowship with one another – growing in relationship with Christ and one another - and faithful in financially supporting the mission of this congregation – ensuring the vitality of our vocation as a parish moving forward. This is a powerful testimony of Christ's resurrection life in our midst.

As I look toward our future together, I am so very excited about the life God is calling us into, as disciples of Jesus in this community of Blowing Rock. It is a joy to serve among you as your rector.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew +". The "A" is large and stylized, with a long vertical stroke. The word "Andrew" is written in a cursive script, and a small "+" sign follows it.

The Reverend Andrew J. Hege

Rector

## FROM OUR SR. WARDEN

In January 2022, when I made my first report to the vestry, I listed three priorities for the year. They were: 1) Ramp up our efforts to attract younger members and families with children; 2) Improve communication within and outside the parish; and 3) Get vestry and lay people more directly involved in church work. Eight months later, I am happy to report major progress on all three fronts.

- 1) We hired Lindsey Herring as our Christian Formation Coordinator. Though she has only been on the job a couple of months, Lindsey has already reinvigorated children's Sunday School and the Godly Play curriculum. Michelle Curry has been working diligently to train young people as acolytes. And, thanks to your generosity and support, we are moving forward with plans to build a play space for younger children. Are we sure that these efforts will pay off in increased church membership in the next 5 years, 10 years, 20 years? No. Can we absolutely count on attracting 5, 10, or 20 new families with children? No. But we are, after all, people of faith. Part of that faith should be a long-term investment in the future of the parish. It needs to be a multi-faceted approach in which we all participate. These are important first steps.
- 2) Though we still have work to do, we have made significant strides in improving communication both within the parish and between the parish and the community. The web site has been improved with more information and regular updates. Digital communication through the Epistle and newsletter has been formalized. A weekly bulletin insert also helps keep parishioners informed. And one need only look to the *Watauga Democrat's* recent coverage of the Tour of Homes to see the ways in which we're working to keep the public informed about the good work of St. Mary's within the community.
- 3) After careful consideration, your vestry decided to adopt a "Vestry Covenant," essentially a promise (some might even say "contract") that clearly defines our commitment to the wider ministry of the parish. It has been printed in full elsewhere, so I won't go into detail here, but it is an important step in setting expectations for our lay leadership. It also offers guidelines for conducting vestry business in an efficient and, more importantly, Christian manner.

One goal I did not set because frankly I was not sure we could pull it off, was an in-person Tour of Homes. But thanks to Susie Greene, Mary Ellen Raulerson, and the people of St. Mary's, we not only re-established the Tour, but also made it one of our most successful ever. I am in awe of this accomplishment.

Perhaps most important, we continue to gather for worship every single Sunday—even in the face of repeated threats from Covid. Our music ministry goes on thanks to the great work of Jim Bumgardner, the choir, and our choral scholars. And while we relish the opportunity to be together, we have not abandoned our online presence and are taking steps to improve both the in-person and virtual worship experience.

In terms of setting and accomplishing goals, our Junior Warden, Bob Finney, has no peer. If you don't believe me, just read his report. And if you get a chance, thank him for his tireless efforts. And that goes for the rest of the vestry, too. As I wind down my time as Senior Warden, I want to take a moment to thank all of them for making my job easier. Yes, we still have lots of work to do things to do, but given the circumstances of the last two years, our progress has been nothing short of remarkable. It has been my pleasure to work with you and to serve this parish.

I remain (for a few more months anyway) your humble servant,

Tim Silver

## FROM OUR JR. WARDEN

This past year has been a busy year for the church, both inside and outside.

Outside: Under the capable leadership of Doug Galke the Grounds Committee developed a detailed plan for improving the landscape around the church. The plan called for the removal of some diseased trees and trimming of bushes and shrubbery. The committee has been working to execute the plan and improve the appearance of the landscape around the church to make it more appealing to people to enter the church and see what we are about. The ramp to the entrance on Chestnut Dr has been repaired. The sidewalk in front of the Main St entrance has been repaired. Big “Thank You” to everyone who showed up for Parish Workdays to improve the grounds.

Inside: The Building Committee has been reestablished and is working on improving storage space inside the church. Various items that no longer have any use have been purged. Additional storage space has been built. New humidifiers have been installed to improve the control of humidity in the church (especially during cold winter days). A new refrigerator has been installed to replace the 30+ year refrigerator. Other improvements are planned. The service agreement on the elevator has been renegotiated to save the church \$800 a year. The church has converted all electric bulbs to LED bulbs to reduce energy and save money on utility bills. Special thanks to Rob Rhoads for his work to improve storage space in the attic.

Play space: Work on the new play space has begun and should be completed in October or early November. This meets a need that was identified during the discernment process. A special thank you to Jim West for his work in developing/improving site plans that were used in the contracting and permitting process. Without his work this project could not have been completed.

Very Respectfully

Bob Finney

Junior Warden

## **CHRISTIAN FORMATION**

We've embarked on a new season of Christian Formation, with Godly Play at the core of the training in an intergeneration format. As most of you know, we hired a new Christian Formation coordinator, Lindsey Herring, who began in late June. Fr. Andrew and Lindsey have been able to get Godly Play off the ground in July and average attendance is picking up at a steady pace. We anticipate more programming for children and youth in the fall, as well as creating new partnerships in the community.

She continues to be in the process of volunteer recruitment for the primary positions in Godly Play, storyteller and door person. As we continue to meet the needs of our parishioners and the younger people, we'll be holding a few Godly Play training sessions in the near future. We'll be announcing those training dates in the coming month. Anyone who'd like to be involved, those with no Godly Play experience and those with, are encouraged to attend.

## **TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**

The Technology Committee has had a busy year! Thanks to our previous chair, Doug Galke, St. Mary's now has an inventory of all of our electronic equipment, including their in-service dates, so the committee can now work out a regular schedule for maintenance and replacement. This year, St. Mary's has also installed a permanent, unobtrusive, livestreaming system with excellent video; we are looking for a way to improve the sound on the YouTube livestream for our homebound and seasonal/traveling members.

We are currently working on a solution to make our in-person experience more intimate and inclusive, especially for congregants who are having issues hearing and fully participating in services. If you have suggestions or questions about that work, or other issues you have noticed, please ask any committee member.

*Marjory Holder, Chair*

## **OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

2022 has been a busy year for the Outreach Committee and a capstone for the year was the ability to sit down and decide just how to divide up the \$85,500.00, which the Tour of Homes made this year. No small amount of credit goes to Susie Greene and Mary Ellen Raulerson, who with only three months to plan and execute, "Gotta Done". There were also an uncountable number of other folks from the congregation and the community at large, who put their shoulders to the wheel and conspired in the plan to make it a success. There was definitely evidence of the Holy Spirit at work and we all grew from the experience, as St. Mary of the Hills continued the tradition of saying, "Our mission is to be an instrument of Love in the world that surrounds us. We do not live just for ourselves."

There were three important presentations this year at our meetings, which gave us the opportunity to look at the world and to consider some very important issues facing us all: Racism, Gun Violence and Climate Change. These presentations and the discussions, which followed resulted in our making contributions to: Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing in Atlanta, GA, Sandy Hook Promise, Gabby Gifford Law Center, and New River Conservancy.

Following the news and tragic events in other places, we made contributions to: World Central Kitchen for work in Ukraine, Doctors Without Borders, Anglican Alliance in Tonga, Kentucky Hurricane Relief (Episcopal Relief and Development), St. Phillips Episcopal Church in Uvaldi, TX for work with children and Post Traumatic Stress.

Some smaller and yet ever so important contributions were for: Back 2 School Festival, Student Tuition for a young girl in Sri Lanka, Support for our student, Pabasara, through Compassion International, Local Immigrant Justice Coalition Scholarship for a Hispanic Student.

The funds which we have dispersed as of July 31<sup>st</sup> 2022 total: \$9,600.00 Locally, \$6,500.00 Nationally and \$12,744.00 Internationally.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: Lynn Coulthard, Gary and Judy Gloster, Olivia Knight, Mike Austel, Patty and Carmen Patella, Clare Tager, Sue Wilders, Susie Greene, Amanda Hege, Andrew Hege, Torre Hinnant, Loy McGill, Tina McKnight.

## **2022 TOUR OF HOMES ANNUAL REPORT**

We are happy to report that **\$85,500** from the Tour of Homes is now available to be distributed to non-profit organizations in the High Country. This huge success is directly attributed to all of your hard work. We could not have done this without you! Thank you from the chairs, Susie Greene and Mary Ellen Raulerson.

Mark your calendars for next year's tour – Friday, July 28, 2023 and the pre-tour gala – Thursday, July 20, 2023.

We are so pleased to announce that our 2023 Tour of Homes Chair is JoAnn Hallmark.



## **COMMITTEE AND MINISTRY CHAIRPERSON CONTACT INFORMATION**

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### ***Cover Image***

*St. Mary of the Hills by Ed Springs, 2020*

*This new rendition of St. Mary of Hills, by parishioner Ed Springs (1938-2020), reflects the changed landscape of the church's exterior following the loss of the great maple tree that stood on the front lawn for more than one hundred years.*

## **ST. MARY OF THE HILLS EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

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