

ST. MARY OF THE HILLS EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Reports for the Annual Parish Meeting
Sunday, August 27, 2023

ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Annual Meeting Agenda

August 27, 2023

9:00 AM

Welcome and Call to Order

Opening Prayer

Appointment of Meeting Officers

Secretary

Parliamentarian

Approval of Minutes from August 2022 Annual Meeting*

Treasurer's Report

Senior Warden's Report

Election of New Vestry Members*

Rector's Report

Adjournment

***requires vote**

Annual Parish Meeting, August 28,2022
In Person, Parish Hall and Via Video Conference

The annual meeting of our parish was called to order at 9:12am. Fr. Andrew Hege offered an opening prayer.

Fr. Andrew and Elizabeth Sudderth, Clerk of the Vestry, verified that a quorum was in place for the meeting, as 34 voting members were in attendance.

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

Secretary: Elizabeth Sudderth

Parliamentarian: E.B. Springs

The minutes of the 2021 annual meeting were presented for acceptance.

Marjory Holder made a motion approve the minutes.

Cathia Silver seconded the motion.

No discussion followed; the approval of the 2021 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 diligent, thorough work. She also expressed her thanks to the Finance committee chaired by Orian Carter for their support and hard work.

She reported the year-to-date parish revenue is well above the budgeted amount, even without the Tour of Homes revenue. Expenses are also within expected parameters. The parish net income is currently at \$99,118. Cash on hand is \$234,233.

Total pledges are \$460,890; YTD we have received \$286,375 (62%). Our operating budget is \$440,000.

The current balance of the trust and endowments is \$712,650.

Fr. Andrew presented the candidates for Vestry, to begin 3-year terms on January 1, 2023. They are Mike Austell, Michelle Curry, and Sue Sweeting (year-round) and Burt Mulford (seasonal). Fr. Andrew asked if there were any additional nominations from the floor. There were none.

Leslie Billingsley made a motion to close the nominations.

Roy McCraw seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by parish vote.

Lisa Kaufmann made a motion with a second from Catherine Carter that Mike Austell, Michelle Curry, Sue Sweeting, and Burt Mulford be elected to 3-year terms on the Vestry beginning on January 1, 2023.

The motion was approved by parish vote.

Fr. Andrew shared the Rectors report.

He expressed his thanks to the Vestry members who will complete their term of service at the end of December. He noted that when Doug Galke, Tim Silver, Lisa Kaufmann, and Roy McCraw began their Vestry terms, they expected a very different three years than what developed. They have been called upon to make many difficult decisions over these past years, as well as many exciting and good ones.

Andrew expressed particular thanks to the wardens. Tim and Doug have been a source of calm strength and wise counsel for him and for the parish. They have also been fantastic friends to Andrew.

He shared his appreciation for the hard work of Amanda White as our Treasurer.

Andrew also expressed thanks to Elizabeth Sudderth who serves as Clerk of the Vestry and does good work keeping our records and keeping us on track.

He expressed thanks for the parish staff. He feels privileged to serve as part of a team that includes Greta Wilson, Bill Stroh, Jim Bumgardner, Lindsey Herring, and Joe Raulerson. Andrew noted we are all thinking of Jim as he recovers from surgery.

He noted that we will greatly miss the incredible service of Bill Stroh as he retires soon as church Sexton. There will be a gathering to honor Bill and his many years of service at Coffee Minute on September 25. Please be there to let Bill know how much we appreciate him, and Andrew asked that each of us seek Bill out to wish him well in his retirement and to thank him for a job very well done. He has gone above and beyond for our parish countless times.

Andrew also expressed his thanks to the community of clergy at St. Mary's who support and encourage him. Fr. Sam Tallman, Bishop Gary Gloster, Fr. Rick Lawler, Fr. Rick Williams, Fr. Bob McCloskey, and Fr. Bob Browning all serve as wise counselors and wonderful friends.

Fr. Andrew reflected on where our parish is at this, our first meeting largely in person in three years. He has been reflecting on our grace and flexibility as a people.

At our annual meeting last year, Andrew spoke of the theme of Following Jesus, Forming Disciples.

The goals were a renewed emphasis on Christian Formation, the building of a Play Space for our youngest parishioners, to revive the Tour of Homes as an in-person event, the formation of a Pastoral Care Team, and a Planned Giving program.

We have hired Lindsey Herring as our Christian Formation Director. Lindsey would love to meet you to hear about your faith journey and to see how we can live into that.

The Play Space will be a beacon for our community to show us as a welcoming space for families.

As we revived the Tour of Homes as an in-person event after two years as a virtual fund-raising effort, not only were we successful in holding a huge in-person event, but approximately \$85,000 was raised. Those dollars don't stay here but will go forth from this place to do much good work. Next year's tour promises to be just as successful with Joann Hallmark as the chairperson.

Lynn Searfoss is leading a new Pastoral Care Team. You will hear details about the goals of that team soon. Lynn plans to build on and support the work already being done so faithfully by Friends of St. Mary.

Our planned giving program, Sustaining Grace, led by Roy McCraw, has put in place a wonderful way of giving which will benefit the parish for many generations to come.

Fr. Andrew shared that going forward we are called to continue our work as disciples. As today's Scripture from the 13th chapter of Hebrews states, "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels".

As we remain steadfast, form disciples, and continue to follow Jesus these efforts may take us near and far as we expand on the work of the Pastoral Care team. He also plans to resume our practice of Eucharistic ministers visiting members to take communion. Andrew plans to build on the outreach of the donations of the Tour of Homes proceeds as our parish looks for ways to help combat homelessness and hunger in our communities. Our Outreach committee is also an inspiration to Andrew as we seek not to be complacent.

Andrew reminded us that we are called to raise up disciples at every age and stage of life. Our Christian Formation programs can serve as a powerful vehicle for doing just that. As we reflect on the gift of evangelism, we are called to invite, welcome, and connect with others seeking Christ. He looks forward to further expanding on our current efforts to deepen and widen our reach to all who seek the love of God in this place.

Andrew encouraged us to remember that prayer and worship are the first work of the church; worship of the Triune God is our primary purpose. Praying for and with one another shows who we are as a parish family as we follow Jesus Christ and form disciples.

Sue Sweeting made a motion with a second from Lisa Kaufmann to adjourn the annual meeting at 9:42am.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Sudderth, Clerk of the Vestry

Vestry Nominees

(to serve terms beginning January 2024 through December 2026)



Marshall Culp

(Year-round Member)

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

2 years

In what areas of ministry are you involved?

Grounds Committee, Men's Breakfast, Hospitality House food pickup/delivery, Parish Workdays, and Tour of Homes volunteer.

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

From my first parish spring workday, I felt connected to our church community by parishioners who warmly embraced me and many who I have come to know while serving in other projects around the parish.

It would be an honor to serve on the vestry and continue to serve St Mary and hopefully enrich my spiritual life and my feeling of connectedness to our entire parish.

Favorite story from scripture?

David and Goliath



Lynn Searfoss

(Year-round Member)

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

13 years

In what areas of ministry are you involved?

Choir, Eucharistic Minister, Parish Care Team

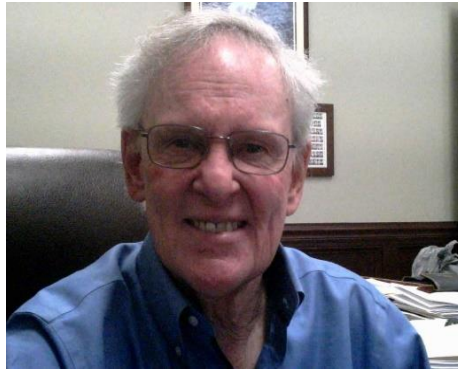
What excites you about serving on the Vestry at this time?

I am interested in collaborating with the other members of the Vestry as we seek to further build, enhance, and serve our parish community. I am also very excited about finding directions for growth as we move into the future.

Favorite story from scripture?

My very favorite story is the Annunciation--God breaking through into the life of an ordinary woman to call her to extraordinary ministry, and Mary's immediate and unequivocal "Yes!".

My second favorite story is the Parable of the Good Samaritan, a tale of compassion and service.



Jim Snow

(Seasonal Member)

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

27 years

In what areas of ministry are you involved?

Tour of Homes volunteer, Lay Reading (Lector)

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

The opportunity to serve St. Mary of the Hills and its congregation.

Favorite story from scripture?

The Parable of the Good Samaritan



Jill Storelli

(Year-Round Member)

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

4 years

In what areas of ministry are you involved?

Hospitality House Meals (Bread of Life), Flower Guild, Usher

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

Getting to know more parishioners and being more involved in parish activities and decisions.

Favorite story from scripture?

Growing up in the Catholic Church we were encouraged not to read the Bible so do not have a favorite story but am now enjoying becoming familiar with all the stories.

FROM OUR RECTOR

Dear Friends in Christ,

For more than one hundred years, St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church has stood at the corner of Main Street and Chestnut Drive in Blowing Rock. In each generation, the doors of this place have been opened to God's people for prayer and proclamation, sanctuary, silence, and song.

In so many ways, 2023 has been a normal year in that sense – God's people have gathered, day by day and week by week, for worship. The COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions that kept us separated now seem largely in our rearview mirror and many Sundays this year have seen ushers inviting folks to make additional space in their pews so that others might join. It is a joy to see and experience the spiritual vitality that is so present in this place.

But 2022 and 2023 have also been exceptional in the life of St. Mary of the Hills, a year of great abundance.

Earlier this summer, we paused to bless and set apart our new play space to be haven of hospitality and joy, tangible signs of God's presence among us. That is exceptional, a sign of God's abundance.

As I shared when we gathered, I believe this space to be an icon for us to look upon prayerfully, ever calling us to be about welcoming children and their families into our midst while also inviting each and every one of us to adopt a holy sense of playfulness about the work of ministry to which we are called in this community of faith.

Over the course of the past year, dozens of adults and children have engaged in the life-long journey of Christian formation, through Godly Play, Bible study, book conversation circles, and other study groups. Each and every gathering is exceptional, a sign of God's abundance.

On Friday, July 28 more than 1200 guests passed through the four homes on this year's Tour and many more stopped by the front lawn to peruse Timeless Treasures or take home a treat from the Bake Sale. Inside the Parish Hall a delicious lunch was served as laughter and conversation filled the air.

Thanks to the generosity of faithful folks from this parish and far beyond, the 2023 Tour of Homes will disburse grants to local non-profit agencies who are about building up the kingdom of God by feeding those who are hungry, housing those experiencing homelessness, sheltering those experiencing violence and abuse, caring for children and their families, and striving for a more just community for all to call home. That is exceptional, a sign of God's abundance.

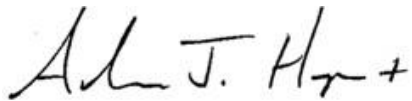
The generosity and faithfulness of this parish stretches deep and wide. Because of your generosity, the Vestry passed its 2023 budget with a record amount pledged in support of common mission and ministry. 126 households in our parish committed a total of more than \$475,000 toward the annual operating budget of the parish. That is exceptional, a sign of God's abundance.

The year ahead promises more opportunity to discover places of God's rich and abiding abundance. A new Vestry class will join an already deeply thoughtful and engaged group of leaders who are thinking creatively and imaginatively about our future as God's people gathered at St. Mary of the Hills.

In the weeks ahead, we'll welcome new members into the fold of the Episcopal Church through confirmation and reception with Bishop McLoughlin, we'll make commitments of time, talent, and treasure as we look toward 2024, and we'll continue the vocation of worship and prayer, formation and outreach that are at the heart of what it means to follow Jesus together.

By the grace of God's abundance, good things lie ahead. It remains, as ever, a pleasure to serve among you as your priest and rector.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrew J. Hege". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a small cross at the end of the line.

The Rev'd Andrew J. Hege

Rector

FROM OUR SR. WARDEN

It has been my pleasure to serve as your Senior Warden this year. I have had a front row seat as I have tried to support our hard-working Rector, dedicated Junior Warden, and committed Vestry, as we all tackled the tasks required to run a parish of this size. I can say with certainty and honesty that we are in good hands with both ordained and lay ministers at St. Mary's.

As you might imagine, most of the vestry's efforts surround being good stewards of our financial resources. We are in an excellent financial condition thanks to current and former vestry and staff work in this area as well as the amazing ongoing generosity of parishioners. One particular challenge has been identified, however.

You may not realize it but when it comes to upkeep and enhancement of our physical space we rely on only one source of money, our Capital Fund. Historically this has been rejuvenated with periodic large donations from parishioners. In 2023, the vestry allotted a small amount from the parish budget for the Fund for the first time ever. Our other ministry and outreach commitments limit what we can do for the Capital Fund moving forward. As Junior Warden, Bob Finney has identified many areas of upkeep, from the elevator to exterior painting to restoring parts of the bell tower. Additionally, there are things like landscape, sound enhancement, and sacristy upgrades that we would like to accomplish in the future. Bob has put together a helpful spreadsheet to monitor how quickly the Capital Fund will be used based on current and future needs. In short, we have identified replenishment of the Capital Fund as an area of focus in the near future. Expect to hear more soon!

In closing, it has been exciting to see how God has worked at St. Mary's during my term as Senior Warden. Building on the work of those who came before us, I cannot wait to see what lies in front of us!

Chip Monroe

Sr. Warden

FROM OUR JR. WARDEN

This past twelve months have been a busy time for St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church. Our most notable accomplishment has been the completion of the Play Space. Judging from the number of children playing on it, it appears to be a hit with them. We plan to finish the landscaping around the Play Space in September.

Other notable accomplishments include repairing the handicap ramp entering the building from the Chestnut Dr. side, development of a Crisis Management Plan for the church (which we hope we will never need), the building of a new storeroom, two successful parish workdays (another one is planned for the fall of 2023), development of a policy for the accepting of physical gifts to St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church, removal of some dead or dying trees around the church, improvements in the attic to facilitate the storage of various items (i.e., Christmas decorations, Tour of Home supplies, Flower Guild supplies, etc.). Special thanks to Rob Rhoads for his efforts in the attic. Additionally, we repaired the “St Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church” sign and the exterior lighting on Main St. The Grounds Committee conducted a successful yard sale that accomplished two things: (1) the elimination of excess garden tools and (2) generating funds to support improvements in the landscape.

The Building Committee has been active and has identified several items that need repair, TLC, or replacement. The most significant of these is the painting of the exterior of the building. The paint is over 20 years old and is starting to flake off. Four painting contractors were asked to submit bids, and the Vestry selected a contractor at the August meeting. Work will begin in the spring of 2024. Additionally rotten wood in the bell tower was identified as a problem. We are in the process of soliciting bids from five contractors for the replacement of the wood. No contract has been awarded yet, but is planned for the September 2023 Vestry meeting. Work will begin in the spring of 2024. Other minor work is being accomplished either using in-house talent or a handyman services.

The Grounds Committee is working on developing plans for landscape improvement. They are trying to develop a plan that maintains the beauty but requires less maintenance than our current landscape. If you are interested in participating, please contact the Junior Warden at finneyb1@mac.com

The Building Committee is continuing to monitor the building to look for areas that need additional work, repair, painting, and/or cleaning. If you see anything that needs fixing or replacement, please contact the Junior Warden.

Our most significant accomplishment over the past twelve months has been the development of a Reserve Study that identifies future spending requirements (i.e., roof replacement, Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning (HVAC) replacement, painting, etc.) with projected costs. This tool forecasts spending that will need to be funded from the Capital Endowment. This tool highlights the need for periodic investment in the Capital Endowment and helps us prioritize spending. The church is like any home, it requires periodic repair and replacement of equipment. These repairs/replacement can be expensive. For example, the replacement of the HVAC system for the kitchen (currently inoperative) will be about \$9,000. We are currently awaiting bids to begin this work.

Very Respectfully
Bob Finney
Junior Warden

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

It's been an exciting year in the world of Christian Formation. We set out this time last year with certain goals in mind, all centered around the transformative power of Christ. To that end, we created a calendar filled with robust learning opportunities, offering a range of formative experiences for parishioners of all ages. Parishioners had the chance to cultivate a deeper relationship with God through a variety of spiritual practices and classes, such as Centering Prayer workshops and *lectio divina* learning with Christian Formation coordinator Lindsey Herring, book studies for every season with Father Andrew and Lindsey, and topical studies with Father Sam on "Powers and Principalities" and with summer seminarian intern Mitchell Eithun on race relations and Luke Powery's book "Becoming Human," to name a few.

Creating new partnerships in the community was also a Christian Formation focal point. We joined forces with our friends at Rumble Presbyterian Church and began co-hosting "Family Night" events each season of the church year. Congregants unite for celebration and liturgical learning, food and games. Vacation Bible School was another successful area of collaboration. As we haven't had VBS in a number of years, this was especially meaningful. We had quite a few youngsters in attendance as well as a vast pool of volunteers.

Sunday morning Formation offerings continued throughout the year and included Rector's Forum and Godly Play. Rector's Forum covers a diverse range of topics and continues to support new ways of seeing and understanding divine love. We held short Godly Play training sessions, presented new stories and now have more than 10 volunteer teachers. However, more are needed. Parishioners are encouraged to share their learning interests with Father Andrew or Lindsey Herring, who are planning a new season of Christian Formation.

Please consider offering your time and talent to this ministry and let Formation Coordinator Lindsey Herring know if you'd like to learn more.

Lindsey Herring
Christian Formation Coordinator
St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church, Blowing Rock
828.295.7323 ext. 104

2023 TOUR OF HOMES ANNUAL REPORT

Thanks to an inexhaustible and ungrudging amount of work offered by everyone at St. Mary of the Hills and many of our friends in the community, the 2023 Tour of Homes was a great success. We are still awaiting a final accounting but anticipate the net proceeds to exceed \$90,000.00. I could never adequately thank everyone involved for all they did to keep things running smoothly and for getting us to the end of the day, all while keeping smiles on their faces. The success is yours, and the good that your efforts will do in our community will be felt by many!

Next year's Tour will fall on July 26th, 2024, and the likely date for the Gala will be July 18th, so mark your calendars!! We are searching for a volunteer to Chair next year's Tour, and I look forward to helping that person lead us to another success!!

JoAnn Hallmark
Chair

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

During this year your Outreach Committee has considered many issues of need and ways in which we can serve our Lord and be good stewards of the funds you have entrusted with us. We hope and pray that we are accepting the call and challenge to reach out to others in God's Holy name.

As of June 14, 2023 we have disbursed:

\$9,000 to local causes

\$10,000 to national needs

\$10,756 to international needs

The Episcopal Diocese of Navajoland has been adopted as a regular recipient of our resources because the needs caused by poverty are so great. The war in Ukraine was the reason for several gifts to organizations such as: Doctors Without Borders, The World Central Kitchen, ERD and a small English Congregation that was delivering generators to people in Ukraine who were without power. We also contributed to the formation of the Watauga Housing Trust to help create affordable housing for those with little or no income.

We have had several discussions during the year about gun violence. According to Gun Violence Archive, gun violence is a fixture in American life, with more than 200 mass killings, in which four or more people are killed or injured, already this year. Suicide accounts for almost half of the deaths. Data shows that more than 50 people are killed each day. In the overall picture we have a crisis of gigantic proportions, and it is not something that people of faith can ignore. We don't have answers, but we believe that we cannot ignore this epidemic. God, the Author and Giver of Life, is saddened by this waste and destruction of life and the grief that is left in its path.

We are exploring the possibilities of dialogue with people of other denominations and neighbors. This is a vital issue about which we cannot remain silent. We invite any who are concerned to add their voice to the dialogue which is a way that we can reach out in love and in the name of Christ.

Members of the Committee are: Mike Austell, Lynn Coulthard, Judy and Gary Gloster, Susie Greene, Amanda Hege, Torre Hinnant, Olivia Knight, Loy McGill, Tina McKnight, Patty and Carmen Patella, Clare Tager and Sue Wilders.

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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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