



ST. MARY of the HILLS

Episcopal Church



Discover the spirit of St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church, nestled in Blowing Rock, North Carolina, part of the Blue Ridge Mountains.



Parishioners have an intimate relationship with God and the beautiful earth created. Through the years, some things have remained true to the vision of St. Mary's - to be called by God as one body in Christ, to gather united and do good works. Will you come celebrate the bounty that we offer and be a part of the ministry at St. Mary's?

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The community of St. Mary of the Hills is committed to growing spiritually in Christ through worship, stewardship, study, service and fellowship. Parishioners are engaged in an ongoing discernment of God's mission and vision for St. Mary's that touches the hearts and minds of church members and reaches into the community. We are a joyful, inclusive, multigenerational family of God, welcoming and serving others to make a difference in lives and the community.

This vision inspires church members to pursue our mission of spiritual growth, always considering how God wants to use us and our gifts to best serve our members and the community to do Christ's work.



Our values reflect the core beliefs of the parish:

- The concepts of stewardship, servanthood, diversity, inclusivity and the pursuit of the kingdom of God are important to us.
- We believe in serving the community.
- We want to equip our people to use their gifts to help others.
- We honor the celebration of worship through song, ministry, care and outreach.
- A formal liturgical worship service combined with the music experience allow us to glorify God most completely.
- We love Christ, love each other and love our neighbors as ourselves.
- We cherish cross generational mentorships in our church family and beyond.

Letter from the Bishop

Dear Prospective Candidates:

Thank you for your interest in the Diocese of Western North Carolina and, particularly, your interest in St. Mary of the Hills. The congregation will tell you their story in this Profile. Please allow me to tell you a bit of the story of our Diocese.

Our diocese consists of 28 counties in Western North Carolina. We are made up of 62 parishes and six summer chapels and worshipping communities. Around 15,000 people make up the Diocese. Although we have several larger churches, many of our towns and parishes are smaller in size, but just as strong in faith. We are, of course, situated in or near beautiful mountains, streams, and valleys. That is a demographic view of the Diocese. We are so much more.

Our mission statement is: "Walk in the Way. Widen the Walls. Wake up the World." This mission statement guides all we do to serve God's people and share the love of Christ. Our clergy are collegial, friendly and committed to serve our Lord. If you are called to serve here, you will participate in Fresh Start to help you become acclimated to the Diocese and have a support group among your fellow presbyters, including a mentor.

We are a diocese of faithful lay people and clergy striving to better know Christ and to serve God in many, many ways. Our parishes are sometimes very different, but they are all drawn together by a call to serve and a sense that they are part of the wider Body of Christ.

May God bless you and the Discernment Committee as you begin a process of mutual discernment.

Faithfully,

+José A. McLoughlin

VII Bishop, Western North Carolina



Our Diocese

Led by Bishop José McLoughlin, the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina consists of parishes, summer chapels, 2 conference centers, a retirement community, and a parochial school in the 28 westernmost counties of North Carolina. In the 1840s Bishop Ives established a mission center in Watauga County at Valle Crucis.

A continued missionary spirit led to churches being formed throughout the mountain region of North Carolina. From the cathedral in Asheville to small mountain parishes scattered throughout this rugged area, the diocese believes we are partners in God's mission to "restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." *Book of Common Prayer*, page 855.

Together, we

Walk in the Way of Jesus

Widen the Walls, welcoming all people -- no exceptions

Wake up the World to the grace and mercy of God.

You can find more information on the website:

<https://www.diocesewnc.org/>

Our History

In 2018, we celebrate the Centennial Anniversary of St. Mary of the Hills. Originally founded as a summer chapel overlooking the John's River Gorge in 1891, the church was first called Church of the Holy Spirit. The church moved to a new location on Dogwood Lane, and then in 1921 moved to a new building on Chestnut Drive. The old Dogwood building was sold and became a private residence. Also around 1903, a Mission House/Library was built on Main Street to house Father Savage and to serve as a lending library for the community. This building is now the Village Café and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

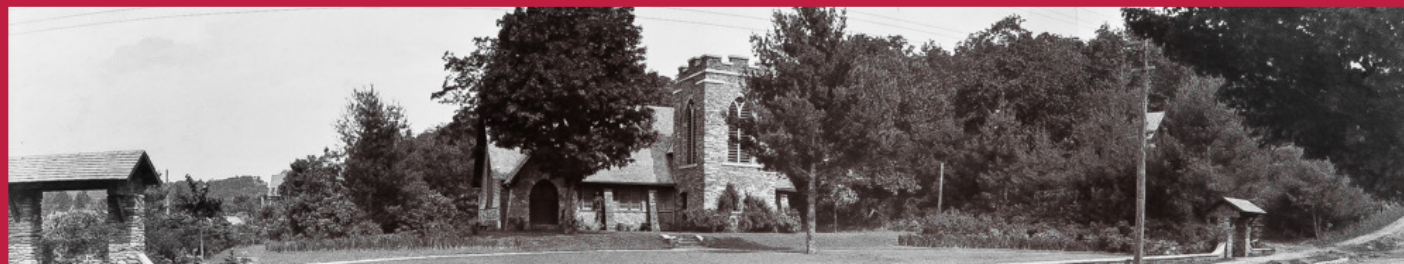
In 1917, the congregation, under the leadership of Susie Parker Stringfellow, secured a lot at the south end of Main Street from C.E. Spencer for \$2000. Construction began soon after, but Mrs. Stringfellow, who was so instrumental in the beginning of this project, died before its completion. W.W. Stringfellow added greatly to the financial portion of this project as a memorial to his wife Susie (a member of the Cannon textile family) and, it is said, in humble gratitude for cancelling his booking and thus not sailing on the doomed voyage of the Titanic. The cornerstone of the church was laid on September 26, 1918 and the church was consecrated as St. Mary of the Hills on August 7, 1921. The church remained a mission until 1972. At that time, St. Mary's became a parish, signifying its capacity to be self-supporting and to maintain a full-time priest.



As the congregation continued to grow, room became a great problem. In 1990, Architect Derald West was hired and a Building Committee formed. The primary instruction to both the architect and the builder was to maintain the integrity and uniqueness of the original structure. Also, all three buildings on the church grounds—the church, the rectory, and the parish hall—were to be connected into one unit. This was accomplished.

In 2000, two members presented a challenge to the congregation to build needed Sunday School space above the Parish Hall. Using the same architect and builders, this project was completed in 2002.

In 2013, following a generous donation, the “Stones Will Sing Campaign” completed a \$1.3 million fund drive. Funds were used to renovate the sanctuary, correct the water problems under the church, and purchase a new Lively-Fulcher organ.



Our History

Details of Interest

Madonna of the Hills

A generous gift from internationally known North Carolina artist, Elliott Daingerfield, sparked a new direction for the congregation. Daingerfield's spectacular painting, "Madonna of the Hills," depicting Mary holding baby Jesus against the backdrop of a striking blue sky and gently rolling hills in the distance, is located above the retable and was painted between 1917 and 1918. The painting represents the following High Country legend:

On the summer solstice, the Lady Mary walks across the hills at dawn. If She walks in light, the fields will be blessed with a rich harvest; if She walks in the shadows, the year will be full of sadness.

Daingerfield was a seasonal resident of Blowing Rock and a member of St. Mary's for over fifty years. He believed that "Art is a vehicle of God's expression, the language of the spirit." After the gift of the painting, our church was renamed "St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church."

Church Bells

St. Mary's has four bells that were cast in Baltimore, installed in 1921, electrified in 1951, and that still ring daily on the hour. The largest was dedicated to the men from Watauga County who fought in World War I. The ivy on the bell tower is said to have originated from a sprig growing in the cloister at Westminster Abbey.

"The Offering"

A statue of the Virgin offering her son to the world was completed by noted sculptor Marjorie Daingerfield Howlett, daughter of Elliott Daingerfield and also a long-time communicant at St. Mary's. The sculpture is located in the Mary Garden beyond the south church wall.

Memorial Stained Glass Windows

The stained glass windows were installed in 1977, 1990, and 1993, and depict the life of Christ.

Stations of the Cross

In February of 2003 the Stations of the Cross were completed and installed in the nave. These beautiful objects of devotional art were designed and cast in bonded bronze by parishioner and sculptor Alex Hallmark.

Kneelers

A beautiful set of kneelers for the church, dedicated in the summer of 2005, were hand-stitched by communicants. Kerstin McDaniel of Asheville, North Carolina and Sweden was both the designer and finisher. The project was begun in 2002 and dedicated to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Dorothy Ella Smith.

Lively-Fulcher Organ

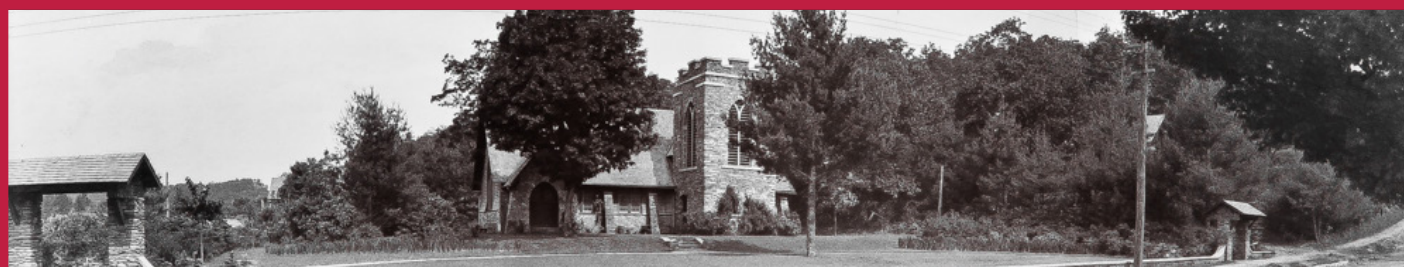
St. Mary's is justifiably proud of its choir, one of North Carolina's finest, and funds for a new organ, built by Lively-Fulcher Pipe Organ Builders, were donated by a St. Mary's couple who wished to remain anonymous. This gift spurred a complete renovation of the nave and was completed in 2014. The renovation included both structural and insulating work to ensure conservation of resources and the continuing structural integrity of the church into the next century.

Della Robbia

A ceramic sculpture of Madonna and Child in the style of della Robbia is on the gable facing Main Street.

Gardens

St. Mary's is located in the heart of Blowing Rock on the corner of Chestnut and Main Streets. The front garden is a source of great beauty, featuring a beautiful green expanse and a colorful flower-filled border that welcomes visitors and the congregation alike to worship each Sunday and provides a public area for music on the lawn and other events. The Mary Garden and the small close are contemplative areas that offer quiet spaces for prayer and reflection.



Where We Live

Called “The Crown of the Blue Ridge,” Blowing Rock sits on the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains. A charming small town of about 1,500 full time residents, it offers cool summers and a four season climate at an elevation of 3,600 feet. In the summertime the population swells with seasonal residents, who add a cultural flair not often found in a town its size. From golf to horseback riding, hiking and skiing, fishing and whitewater rafting, there are many opportunities to stay active year round.

History

Blowing Rock has a rich history. Originally home to the Cherokee and Catawba Native American tribes, the area was subsequently settled by Scots-Irish colonists. Many descendants of the original settlers remain in the area today and include these families: Greene, Bolick, Coffey, Storie, and Hayes. A haven from the summer heat, wealthy individuals would head to the mountains to enjoy the weather, and the locals capitalized on their village charm. The town was incorporated on March 11, 1889, and soon Blowing Rock became a popular destination. Today, the village remains a treasured home for its residents and a prized summer residence or get-away for others.

Just six miles away you'll find Boone, the population center of the North Carolina High Country and home to Appalachian State University. Watauga County is home to several other small communities, such as Valle Crucis, the site of one of the first Episcopal missions in this part of the country.

Once described as one of the Lost provinces of North Carolina, Watauga County was formed in 1849 and named for the Watauga River, said to be a Native American word meaning whispering or beautiful waters. In 1861, part of Watauga county was combined with parts of other counties to form Mitchell county and then in 1911 with parts of Caldwell and Mitchell counties to form Avery county, thus reducing the size of Watauga county to its present size of 312.56 square miles. Located within the Appalachian Mountain range, the county is very mountainous and dominated by the spectacular Grandfather Mountain that rises more than a mile above sea level. Boone is the nation's highest altitude city over 10,000 population in the Eastern United States.

Our Demographics

About 2,700 people live within a three mile radius of St. Mary's. Over the next five years, population growth is expected to be 5.3 percent, a faster rate than the state average of 5.1 percent. The average age of individuals in the area is rising, a fact similar to North Carolina as the state population is aging.



Where We Live

In the area there are more married couple households and fewer single parent households compared to the state. Also, there is a slight increase in population per household from additional children. The children are aging through and as with many smaller towns, leaving for bigger cities. One important factor for family development is that the Watauga County School System is consistently ranked as a top system in North Carolina; the 2017 ranking was second in NC.

Community data indicates a strong desire for:

- Family support and intervention services
- Community and advocacy programs – social activities, advocacy, outreach
- Community activities and cultural programs – holiday programs, youth, alternative worship, Christian formation
- Religious/Spiritual Programs – crisis support, family activities, counseling and enrichment

Attractions include:

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| The Blowing Rock | Tweetsie Railroad | Sky Valley Zip Tours |
| Appalachian Ski Mountain | Grandfather Mountain | Horn in the West |
| Linville Caverns and Falls | Mast General Store | Mystery Hill |
| Pisgah National Forest | Moses Cone Park | Julian Price Park |
| Mountain Home Music | High Country Jazz | Schaeffer Center for Performing Arts |
| Barter Theatre | Westglow & Chetola Spas | Blowing Rock Art & History Museum |

For additional information, you may wish to visit these links:

<https://blowingrock.com>
www.wataugaschools.org
www.wataugacounty.org
blueridgeparkway.org
townofboone.net
tweetsie.com
theblowingrock.com
grandfathermountain.org



Who We Are

Worship

St. Mary of the Hills is a welcoming, inclusive, high-energy congregation that has been doing God's work in western North Carolina for a hundred years. Our church is deeply rooted in the timeless traditions of Episcopal faith. Formal liturgy, quality choral music, and celebration of holy days bind us together in worship and fellowship with each other.

Outreach

We believe it is important to live out our faith in service and outreach to the community. St. Mary's is the leading provider of meals and financial assistance to Hospitality House, Watauga County's homeless shelter. The church also provides food and financial assistance to other local charities such as the Hunger Coalition and the student food bank at Appalachian State University. We maintain an active presence in a nearby Hispanic community, assisting with tutoring, childcare, and other services. For several years running, Heifer International has recognized us for our generous support of that organization. Each year, hundreds of our members work tirelessly to put on our Tour of Homes, an event that provides major funding for local and regional non profits. We view all these efforts as an expression of love for our neighbors and a key part of our Christian ministry. St. Mary's is, above all, a strong and loving parish family.



Fellowship

We support each other in good times and bad. We hold up our church as a place of healing for broken bodies and broken spirits. Pastoral care is important to that mission, but the congregation also takes great joy in ministering to each other (ministering is in the della Robbia). It is one of the things parishioners value most about St. Mary of the Hills.

Opportunities

As we enter our second century, we sense exciting opportunities to channel our energy in new directions. St. Mary's needs to bolster its program of Christian education, especially its Sunday School and youth programs. We also hope to complement time-honored traditional liturgy with fresh worship experiences that meet the needs of those who prefer less formal services. Such efforts are essential if we hope to bring younger families, children, and youth into our parish family. We see this not as a break with tradition but rather as a viable opportunity for evangelism. Our troubled world sorely needs Christ's enduring message of love and acceptance and we need to do whatever we can to disseminate that good news. Perhaps one of our own members put it best during one of our Holy Conversations. "We have an obligation to spread the gospel daily," she explained, "and if necessary, use words."

From Our Holy Conversations and the Congregation Assessment Tool, we identified several areas in which we need to expand and/or improve our ministries.

- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church, especially youth and families with children.
- Provide more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation at every age and stage of life.
- Continue to develop and enhance ministries that work toward healing those broken by life's circumstances.

Activities



(Counter-clockwise beginning in middle) The annual Tour of Homes funds programs for those in need, the annual yard clean-up gives an opportunity to mentor, Rise Against Hunger is a multi-generational event, Hospitality House serves the hungry, fellowship dinners build community, the Bake Sale generates funds for outreach, and the Madrigal Feast nourishes our music program.



The Rector We Seek



We are a well-educated and informed congregation. Our rector should offer relevant, interesting, challenging sermons that aid our efforts to live Christian lives. Most of our members appreciate historical context and current interpretation of scripture in weekly sermons. Collectively, the parish leans toward liberal Anglo Catholic theology and congregants respect others who may have different perceptions of faith or alternative interpretations of scripture. Many members have expressed preference for a rector who talks with us and not to us; sharing insights instead of reading prepared remarks in an academic style. In addition, the ability to sing the service is desired.

Pastoral care is vital to successful ministry at St. Mary of the Hills. Our rector needs to be empathetic and a good listener. Above all, the rector should be available to parishioners, especially in times of need. The ideal rector will also be engaged with the larger community outside the parish. Our priest should love and support us, just as we love and support each other and our neighbors.

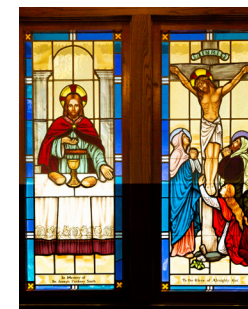
We need a rector who can develop effective strategies to lead the parish toward its goals. We are an energetic congregation that is willing to work, and our priest must empower the laity so that they can assist in our mission. Planning meetings, leadership retreats, and similar activities would prove helpful. Given our future goals, the rector should not fear innovation or the criticism that always comes with it.

Our priest must be willing to experiment, to initiate new worship experiences and other activities that meet changing community needs.

The priest needs to work at revitalization of Sunday School and youth programs. Delegation of authority will likely be key here, along with adequate financial support and encouragement of the process. The rector should empower the laity through Bible and book study and other teaching tools so that the members can assume an active role in Christian formation and education.

As the parish's chief administrator, the new rector is responsible for the church staff, facilities, and finances. Setting clear expectations and work schedules for all staff is an immediate priority. In any church setting, conflict is inevitable. A good rector does not shy away from conflict, but rather seeks to resolve it through negotiation with staff and parishioners.

Other desirable characteristics include intellectual curiosity, friendliness, and a good sense of humor. While we need a spiritual leader, the rector should not be reclusive. We live in the real world and hope that our rector will as well. Five years of experience in active ministry or a related field is preferred. In addition, we prefer that our priest live locally.



What We Offer

Noted author Jan Karon loosely modeled her “Mitford” series books after Blowing Rock and St. Mary’s. No matter if you are a fan, the characterization of our village as a charming, loving family-friendly community, and our parish as a center of pastoral care and service, rings true. In our town you will find respect and an expectation of excellence.

Service

Service is important to us, and our new rector will be part of our vibrant service ministry. You will have the opportunity to lead us to discern other needs and concerns in our area and ways our varied talents can be used. We are a financially stable parish, and eager to grow as a parish. Our congregation is largely accepting of each other and looking forward to supporting our next priest as we reach out in new and increasingly meaningful ways.



Ministry

Our congregation is one of well-educated, caring people. You will benefit from an intellectually challenging environment that is always ready to engage in discussion to discern new approaches to Christian Formation and worship. Yes, we like things the way they are, but we also want to continually deepen our relationship with God. We offer our new rector opportunities to grow with us in relationship to others in our community as we “seek to serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves.” We also recognize that there is a need to add to time-honored traditions to attract families to church. We are open and hungry to embrace the sound and thoughtful programming ideas that you will bring. Our energetic and wise Vestry is an excellent governing body and will welcome your thoughts.

Fellowship

At St. Mary’s, we offer love and support, honesty, and truth to our rector even when it is hard. We pledge communication and partnership. We offer an inclusive community and want you to be part of ours. We will share times of need, joy, happiness and sorrow. You will find that the many cultural and educational opportunities available in Blowing Rock and Watauga County offer refreshment, stimulation and renewal. You will feel respect and friendship in our town and know that the spirit of God is alive and well at St. Mary’s.

You will be a part of the next century of service at St. Mary of the Hills, building on a strong foundation and shaping the next decades of mission and ministry.

Parish Financials

Financial Picture

St. Mary of the Hills is a financially stable Parish thanks to the prudent actions of the vestry, assertive annual Stewardship Campaigns, and subsequent strong pledge support. Data from the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) indicated that in our most recent pledge year, we had 135 givers of record and an average per household annual contribution of \$3,156. Importantly, 97% of respondent parishioners reported in the recent CAT that they would maintain or increase their financial contribution during our search for a new rector. In addition, we also benefit from our Charitable Trust of approximately \$303,000, the interest from which supports our outreach ministry and the Capital Fund of approximately \$283,000, that funds facility improvements and maintenance.

St. Mary's is committed to outreach as evidenced by its Diocesan Pledge payments of an average of \$41,166 per year and its commitment of an average of \$86,370 per year to Outreach. A major component of the outreach effort is the Annual Tour of Homes which celebrated its 60th year in 2018. The Vestry Visioning Project in 2018 has set a goal of increasing outreach expenditures by 1% per year until we reach a goal of 10% of annual pledges.

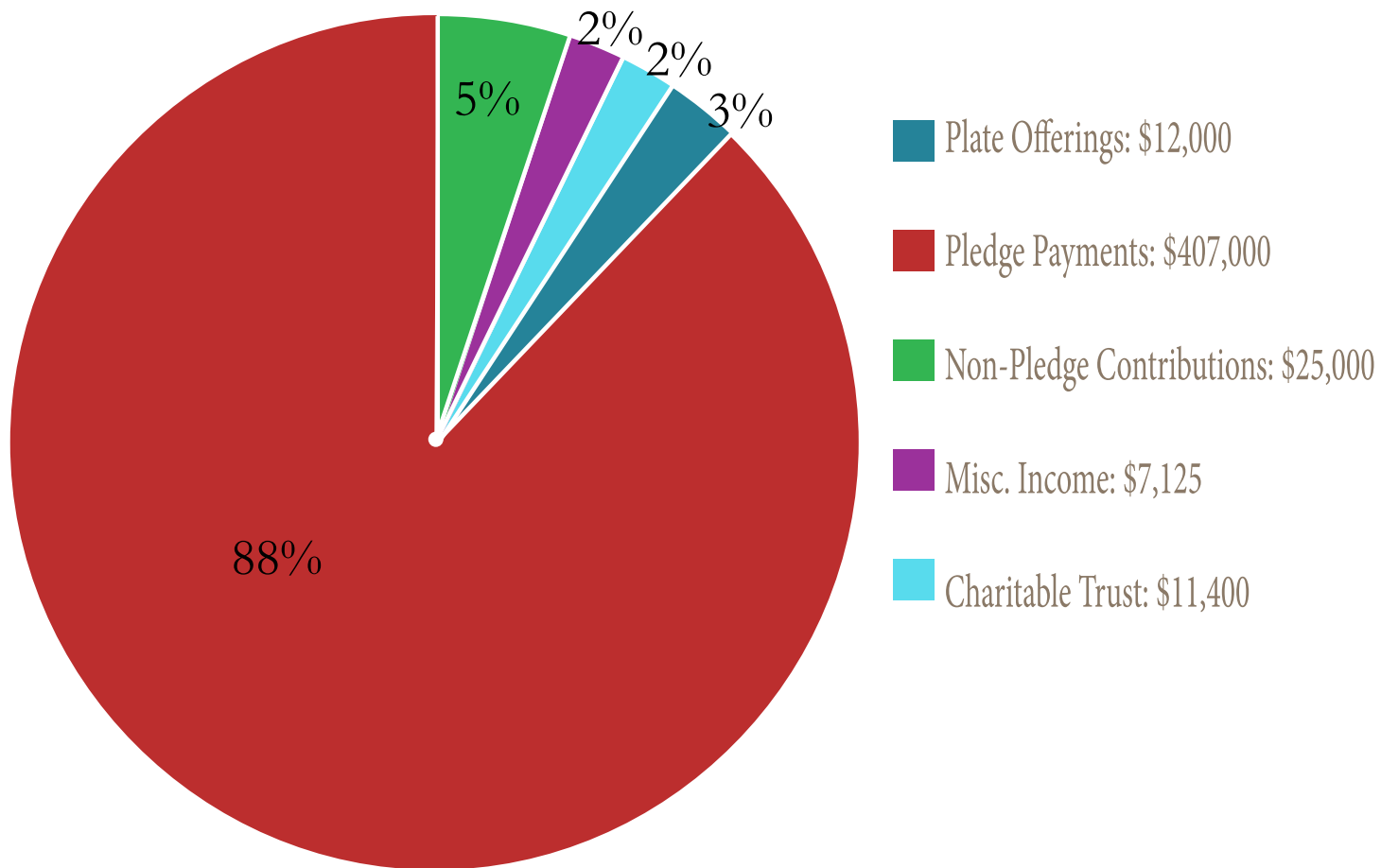
We are also committed to the maintenance and growth of our Parish facilities. Over the past twenty-five years major capital improvements included expansion of the nave, the Rooms to Grow project which increased our Christian Formation and Choir office and storage space, and *Stones Will Sing* that funded a new organ, acoustical enhancements, and structural renovation in the nave.

Despite a healthy financial picture, St. Mary's does face challenges as we move forward. Increasing personnel compensation, the cost of benefits, costs of the maintenance of our Parish facilities and our self-imposed goal of increasing outreach expenditures will put demands on our budget. We also face the challenge of increasing the number and diversity of our membership.

Pie charts illustrate our 2018 budgeted receipts, assets and expenses.

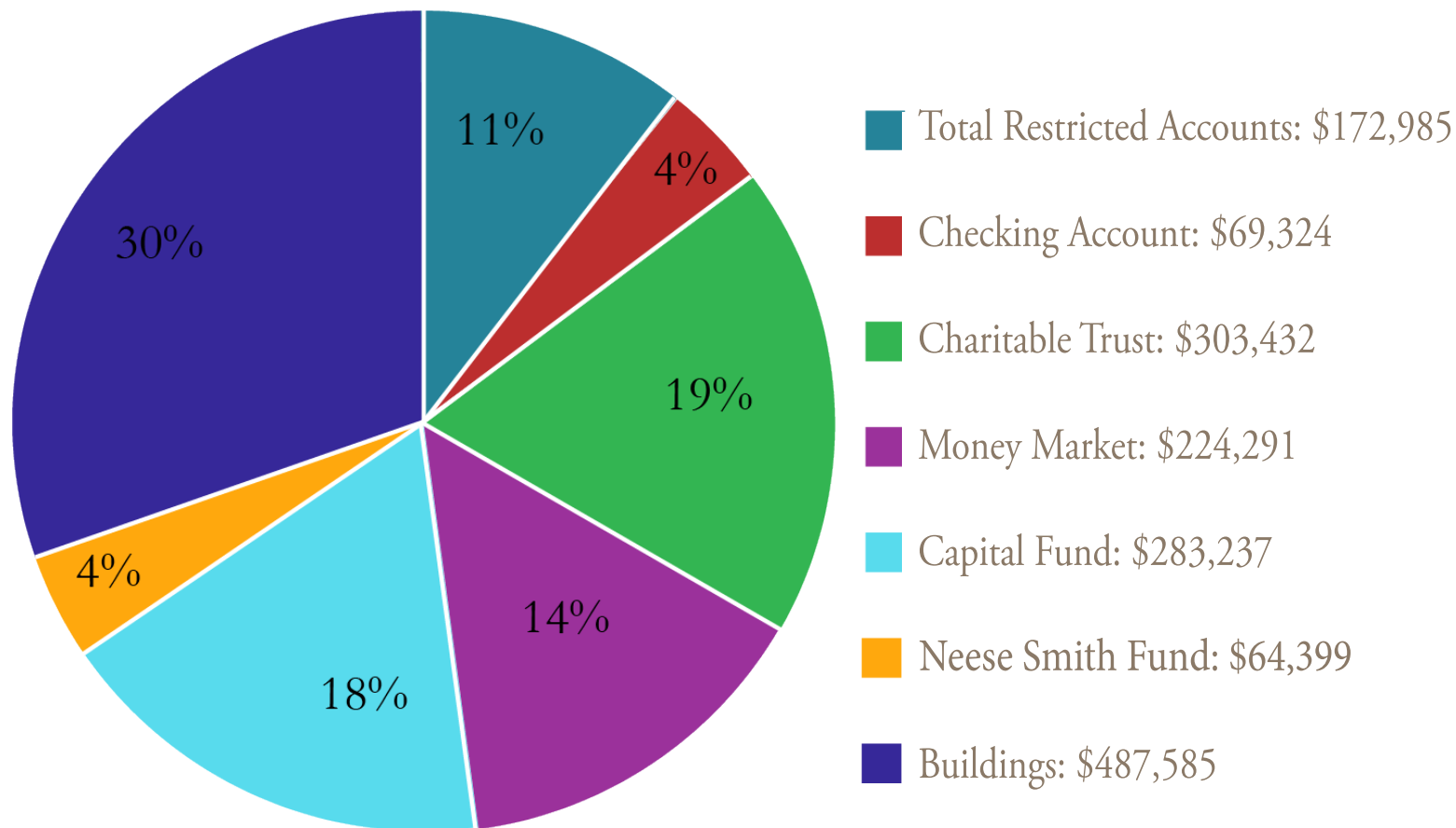
2018 Revenue

Total: \$462,525



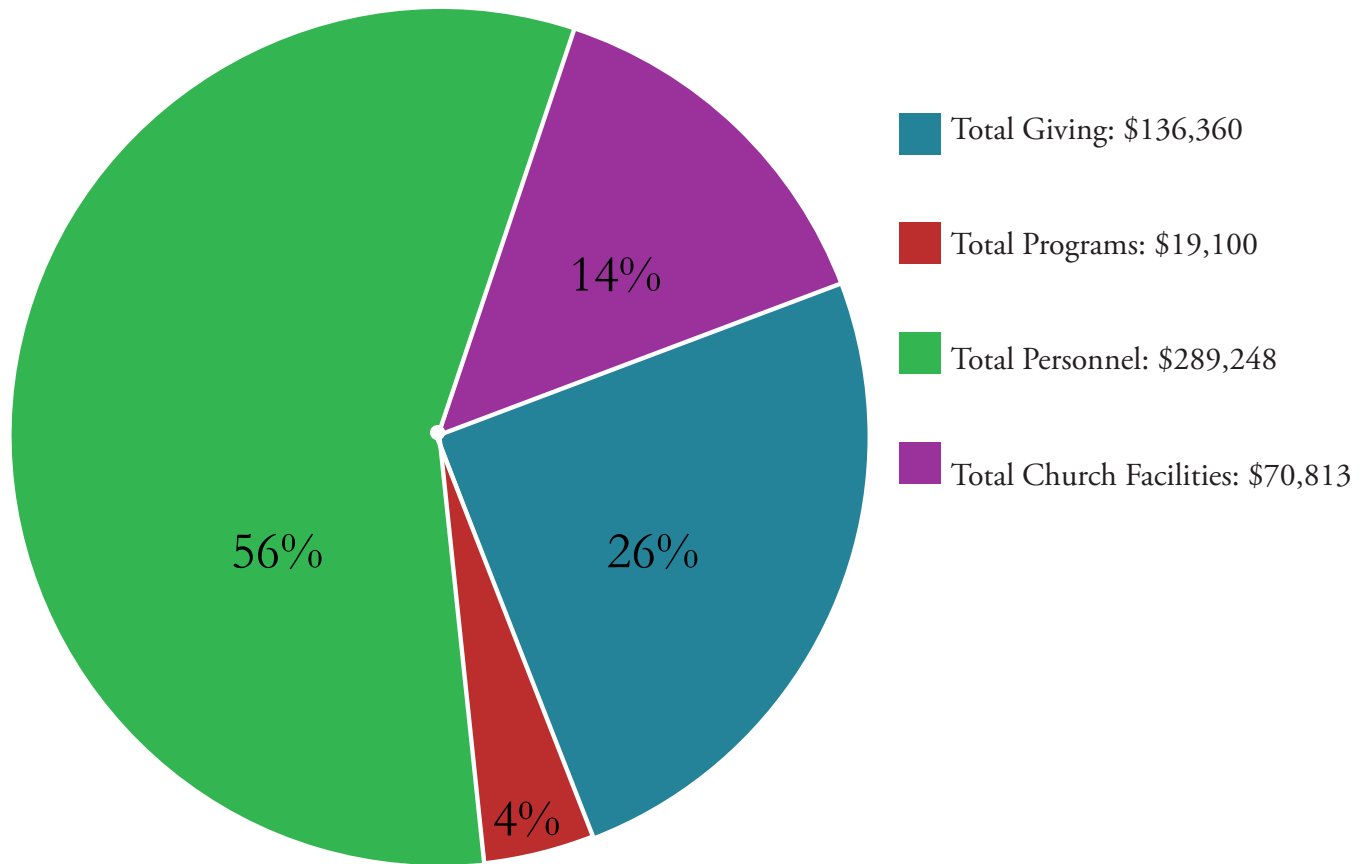
2018 Assets & Restricted Funds

Total: \$1,605,252



2018 Expenses

Total: \$515,521





“I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?” Psalm 121:1

For 100 years these words have been inspiring the people of this parish and community. Will you be a part of this next century of service to God?

How to Apply

If after reading our Profile you feel called to join St. Mary's in ministry, please email Canon Augusta Anderson at canonaugusta@diocesewnc.org with the following items:

- Letter of Interest expressing how you feel called to St. Mary's (addressed to the Discernment Committee but mailed to Canon Anderson)
- Resume
- OTM Portfolio

