

# The Annual Meeting *of* Saint Bernard's Episcopal Church



**St. Bernard's Episcopal Church  
Bernardsville, NJ**

February 1, 2026

Parish Hall

*The Annual Meeting was postponed one week due to the snowstorm on Jan. 25.*

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## Agenda for Annual Meeting for the Year 2025 - St. Bernard's Episcopal Church

- **Call to Order and Opening Prayer**

### Reports, part 1

- **Rector's Welcome** (2 min., *Report in sermon*), *The Rev. Beth Rauén Sciaino*
- **Wardens' Report** (3 min.), *Chris Thomas and Valerie McEntee*
- **Annual Meeting Minutes from Jan. 2025 for Approval** (2 min.) -- see p. 4

### Opening of Polls

- **Nominations** *more details on p. 5 (2 min.)*
  - a. Wardens and Vestry

#### **For Wardens – vote for two**

Valerie McEntee (*for 1 year term*)

Chris Thomas (*for a 2 year term*)

#### **For Vestry Members – vote for three**

Devin McGuire (*1<sup>st</sup> 3 year term*)

Matt Sloan (*1<sup>st</sup> 3 year term*)

Michael Myers (*1 year term*)

- b. Deputies to 2026 Diocesan Convention, Nov. 2, 2025

#### **For the Office of Deputy to Diocesan Convention – vote for three**

Valerie McEntee

Carmen Paul

- c. Delegates to 2026 Watchung Convocation

#### **For the Office of Delegate to the Watchung Convocation – vote for four**

Greg Canose

Mary Jane Canose

Valerie McEntee

Jane Rauén

- **Thanks to outgoing Vestry members** Meg McKee and Pamela Hull (2 min.), *Pastor Beth and Wardens*

### Reports, part 2

- **Finance Presentation** (4 min.), *on behalf of Michael Myers, Treasurer*
- **Stewardship Report** (2 min.), *Valerie McEntee, Stewardship Chair*
- **General Question and Answer period** (3 min.)

### Appreciative Inquiry Conversations

- Reflect on this past year at St. Bernard's. Write down three reasons you come to St. Bernard's. (2 min.)
- *In pairs:* Tell a story about your best experience in the past year of being a part of St. Bernard's Church. Describe a time when you felt alive and excited and glad to in this parish. What made the experience memorable? Who else was involved? What did you do as a result of the experience? (4 min. each – 8 min.)
- *At your table share:* What are your hopes and dreams for our parish? What are two or three things you would love to see St. Bernard's Church doing in the community? (6 min.)
- Opportunity to share with the larger group (6 min.)
- **Declaration of Election and Introductions** (2 min.) *Newly elected and continuing Wardens and Vestry*
- **New Business** (2 min.)
- **Closing Dismissal from Deacon Karen & Adjournment**

<p><b>ST. BERNARD'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES</b> <b>JANUARY 26, 2025</b></p>
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- Rector's Welcome
- Warden's Report presented by Paul Edwards, referring to the report on page 7.
- 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes for Approval – Motion to approve was passed
- Motion to pass the slate of candidates and motion was passed.
- Beth thanks outgoing Vestry members, Linda Engleby and Taylor Hwong
- Finance – High level view of church finances. \$30,000 will likely be pulled out of investments. The boiler replacement was \$25,000 and will come out of major investment fund.
- Stewardship – 2024 our goal for pledges was exceeded. For 2025, we are still waiting for several pledges to come in and we may meet our goal of \$176,000.
- No questions.
- A brief taste of Asset Mapping exercise.
  - Concert space
  - Green space/faith revival of interest
  - Game night (continuing)
- No new business
- Closing prayer and adjournment.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Engleby, Clerk



# St. BERNARD'S Church

## Annual Meeting Election Ballot – February 1, 2026

### **For Warden\* – vote for two**

- ☐ Valerie McEntee (*1 year term*)                      ☐ Chris Thomas (*2 year term*)

### **For Vestry Members – vote for four**

- ☐ Devin McGuire (*1<sup>st</sup> 3 year term*)                      ☐ Michael Myers (*1 year term in order to  
continue serving as Treasurer*)  
☐ Matt Sloan (*1<sup>st</sup> 3 year term*)

### **For the Office of Deputy to Diocesan Convention – vote for three**

- ☐ Pamela Hull    ☐ Valerie McEntee  
☐ Carmen Paul

### **For the Office of Delegate to the Watchung Convocation – vote for four**

- ☐ Gregory Canose    ☐ Valerie McEntee  
☐ Mary Jane Canose    ☐ Jane Rauen

Vestry members can serve two consecutive three-year terms.

### **Vestry members who are continuing:**

<i>2<sup>nd</sup> year of 2<sup>nd</sup> term:</i>	<i>Anne Fritts</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> year of 1<sup>st</sup> term:</i>	<i>Mindy Kirby</i>
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> year of 2<sup>nd</sup> term:</i>	<i>Jenny Moss</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> year of 1<sup>st</sup> term:</i>	<i>Jason Robinette</i>

*\*Wardens: Chris Thomas has served as Warden for 5 years, Valerie McEntee for 1 year.*

### **Our gratitude to Vestry members who are rotating off:**

*After 1 term on Vestry: Meg McKee (Clerk), Pamela Hull*

# LEADERSHIP REPORTS

## RECTOR'S REPORT – *The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino*

How wonderful it is to celebrate ten years of ministry together with you, the people of St. Bernard's Episcopal Church! You continue to live lives of faith that inspire and encourage me and many others. You trust Jesus Christ's call to love one another as we have been unconditionally loved by God and to care for our local community as well as to help people further afield. Thank you for all the ways you proclaim God's love for the world in word and action. My gratitude to you all for being generous with this one precious life you've been given.

St. Bernard's Episcopal Church's worship, fellowship, and service to the community is made possible by the dedication of St. Bernard's Wardens, Chris Thomas and Valerie McEntee, and Vestry, Pamela Hull, Anne Fritts, Mindy Kirby, Meg McKee (Clerk), Jenny Moss, Michael Myers (Treasurer), and Jason Robinette. Thank you for being wonderful partners in ministry. Many thanks to Taylor Hwong for continuing to shepherd Buildings and Grounds, now alongside Jason Robinette. Thank you to those who create opportunities for good fellowship together including our weekly coffee hour hosts, Advent Brunch organizers, Dinner out organizers, and monthly Game Night leader.

The Rev. Karen Lewis, Deacon, helps to lead worship on Sundays, preach, and cover Sundays when I am on vacation. In her primary vocation as a palliative care chaplain and now pediatric chaplain, she supports interfaith families in the hospital, walking alongside, encouraging, and supporting them in holy and difficult moments. The parish of St. Bernard's is honored to champion and support Deacon Karen's chaplaincy (learn more in her report).

After four joyous years with Dr. Marty Sedek as Director of Music, we wished him well as he moved to a parish closer to home to ensure more weekend time with his elementary school aged children. The music program has always been an essential aspect of St. Bernard's worship and carried us through many difficult moments in our history. We give thanks to God for St. Bernard's Choir and section leaders, Samantha Ferrara, Debi Kurisko, Devin McGuire, and Jason Robinette. We were blessed to connect with Tyler Weakland, who came on board as Interim Director of Music in November, beginning on All Saints' Sunday. The choir and parishioners alike appreciate Tyler's musicality and leadership which deepens our worship of God and renews us for the week ahead. The three month Interim period ends as of our Annual Meeting, and we celebrate Tyler's new title of Director of Music.

As Parish Administrator, Alison Davidson is an important member of our leadership team and I'm grateful for her wisdom, support, and commitment to the parish. We also benefit greatly from the work of our off-site Bookkeeper, Karen Buchanan. The consistency of staff and lay leaders over the years has been a real asset of our shared life.

St. Bernard's Cemetery continues to offer comfort for the bereaved and rest for parishioners and community members. All are welcome to be buried at St. Bernard's Cemetery. We are grateful for John Smith's almost ten years of care and management of the cemetery. A new Cemetery Committee is assisting John in this volunteer work, as you can read in the Wardens' Report. Thank you to everyone who is stepping up to steward this important community ministry.

I am grateful that through the affiliation with St. John on the Mountain, we found a way to continue in ministry together that is financially sustainable. This affiliation has allowed me to remain in ministry in Bernardsville and with all of you. The two parishes have found ways to collaborate around joint worship and choir, outreach projects, youth ministry, fellowship, and more. We are reminded that the Body of Christ is not intended to be broken up in disconnected parts but flourishes when we join with one another. It's this relationship building that allows creativity and collaboration to flourish. An example, at our Diocesan Convention on Nov. 21 and 22, it was announced that the Diocese of NJ is giving a gift of \$1 million to Diocese of Jerusalem to help medical and psychological needs of children and youth in Gaza and the West Bank. Bishop Sally French, Bishop of New Jersey, and Archbishop Hosam Naoum, Bishop of Jerusalem, are friends from their time at Virginia Theological School in the Doctor of Ministry program. This gift is from the Jane O. P. Turner Fund, a restricted fund that supports medical needs of children and youth. Instead of being challenged by the fund's restrictions, diocesan leadership were inspired to support a place where such medical support is needed most.

During the season of Lent, our services included the following Prayer over the People by Rev. Sarah A. Speed of A Sanctified Art, [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org). May we continue to embody Christ's love and be encouraged by the Holy Spirit!

As you leave this place, may you find God in every in between. May you know that the world is bigger than two sides. May you trust that you are made in the image of God, and therefore, you contain multitudes. So may you move through this world with an open heart, with a curious mind, and with the confidence that you do not go alone. God is with you in the mountains, in the valleys, and everywhere in between. Trust that good news. **Amen.**



## WARDENS' REPORT – *Chris Thomas, Valerie McEntee*

For St. Bernard's Church, 2025 was another exciting year. In addition to our regular worship and community service, the parish community continued our affiliation with St. John on the Mountain. We are in the third year of a formal 3-year agreement, where the two churches remain independent, but are sharing clergy costs, saving both parishes significantly. We continue to have 3 Sunday services, 7:45 am and 9:00 am at St. John's and 11:00 am at St. Bernard's. This schedule allows Beth to celebrate all three services, ensuring she has fellowship time with both churches at their coffee hours. Both parishes continue to enjoy the new schedules, and it has provided additional worship flexibility at times for both. Due to the success of this affiliation, both vestries agreed in November to continue the affiliation with no planned end date. (The diocese only requires a vote if a congregation wants to end an affiliation.) Also, the wardens of both parishes have started meeting for lunch on a bi-monthly basis to ensure the agreement remains on track.

In addition to the financial benefits, we are continuing to see increased collaboration between the two parishes. We had a number of joint services with combined choirs in 2025. Due to weather, we held St. John's Souper Bowl fundraiser in February, which resulted in a significant increase in the funds raised. We are planning to make this an annual shared event. We also celebrated at St Bernard's for Pentecost, and a joint service at SJOTM in December, followed by a German Christmas Advent coffee hour. It continues to be great to reconnect with their parishioners and enjoy fabulous food and fellowship. Also, a few of the St. Bernard's youth were able to participate in St. John's Christmas pageant and many St. John's parishioners were able to attend our Christmas Eve services. We look forward to many more opportunities to collaborate between the two parishes. The two parishes also joined with St Mark's with a combined service and choir to celebrate the Last Sunday after the Epiphany, followed by a pancake breakfast. This too is becoming an annual tradition.

As in the past, outreach has continued as a top priority for parishioners who gave much of their time and talent to serving the needs of our community. Cathy Ferrara's enthusiasm and guidance are a beautiful thing, and God's Giving Garden produced over 3,000 pounds of food for the Food Bank and Veterans. In addition, the Homework Helpers continued to support our local youth. Under Mindy Kirby's and Mary Kempen's leadership, we continued to support the Food Bank Network of Somerset County with a semi-annual ham, chicken, and turkey collection. This was the second year that St John's and St Bernard's collaborated on Angel's Closet, an event designed to help local families in need, providing clothing, books, sports equipment, toys, bedding, and other essentials in a shopping style distribution event. Aply led by Kathy Tober at St John's, it is a great addition to our affiliation's outreach. Fellowship continued, with regular coffee hours and the fourth year of our Advent Brunch managed by Denise Thomas, Michelle Esposito-Edwards, and June Curtis. Please take the time to read each outreach group's report to see how much good is being done by St. Bernard's Episcopal Church. If you don't already participate, as they become available, we hope you will take advantage of opportunities to be of service to the community.

We continue to struggle with a financial deficit, and even with the reduction in clergy costs from the affiliation, our 2025 budget will include a deficit. However, due to the increases in the stock market, our overall investment balances were not reduced by the amount as much as expected. In 2026, we will continue to pledge 10% of our parish income to the Diocese of New Jersey. We are most grateful to Michael Myers for continuing in the Treasurer role for the parish and for the reports he has developed to support our ongoing finances, as well as budget preparation, ably supported by a Finance Committee.

In 2025, we celebrated the third year of Deacon Karen Lewis's service to St. Bernard's, as she assisted Pastor Beth in worship. However, Dr. Martin Sedek who led the music program the past four years moved on to a new position much closer to his home. We were able to hire a new director of music and organist, Tyler Weakland, who started with us in November, and he has proved to be a great fit, working with our choral section leaders to provide wonderful musical leadership and offerings. Alison Davidson, who has been with us for almost 11 years, continues to serve the parish keeping all the cogs behind the scenes moving which helps the congregation worship together on-site and online through Zoom in spiritually rewarding and meaningful ways, we thank her for her dedication and service. This year, saw the formation of the cemetery committee which will spread out the work load that John Smith has provided so well over the years. We are extremely grateful to John Smith, Alison Davidson, Michael Myers, Chris Thomas, and Greg Canose who will collaboratively manage the St Bernard's Cemetery through the committee, saving us additional salary cost in the process. We also thank Taylor Hwong and Jason Robinette for managing our Buildings and Grounds.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your wardens in 2025. It is our hope and prayer that 2026 will bring all of you, your loved ones, and the communities you serve good health, great blessings, and many opportunities.

## **YEARLY SUMMARY**

2025 was the third year of my appointment to St. Bernards as your vocational deacon. I continue to live into my calling, to serve the dying, without apology. My gratitude, to the people of St. Bernard's for your genuine support, continues to grow. During the course of the year, I have been consistently serving during Sunday worship and have preached 7 times. In addition to my service at St. Bernard's, I have also preached at St. John on the Mountain and St. Mark's and served these parishes on special days. I led a prayer for the second year in a row for The Blessing of the Hounds on the Feast Day of St. Hubert for the Essex Fox Hounds.

## **SECULAR EMPLOYMENT**

### **PALLIATIVE CARE CHAPLAIN AT CHILTON MEDICAL CENTER IN POMPTON PLAINS AND**

### **PERINATAL AND PEDIATRIC CHAPLAIN AT ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON BARNABAS HEALTH IN NEW BRUNSWICK**

I have been serving as the Board-Certified Palliative Care Chaplain at Chilton Medical Center in Pompton Plains for the last 6 years. I have grown and learned so much from this position, but it has also caused frustrations. I feel that my role, as a spiritual care provider, is grossly misunderstood by the hospital as a whole. My team, in particular, minimize my role to that of religious support. This approach reduces the people I can minister to. I believe I would be more beneficial to the patients if I was offered as interfaith or for emotional support. My frustrations have led me to apply to other chaplain positions, and as of October I have also been employed by Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health in New Brunswick as their Perinatal and Pediatric Chaplain. I have continued at Chilton serving in palliative care, as a leader in Schwartz Rounds, and also serving on the Ethics Committee. However, more than half my time is now devoted to Robert Wood. It is my hope that in the weeks to come, I will be officially offered full-time status at Robert Wood and at that time I would resign from Chilton. Working both positions takes enormous energy and time and is not sustainable.

2025 marks my fifth year as a Board-Certified Chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains bringing with it the burden of going through a formal peer-review. I completed this process in the early fall. It required me to write a paper about my professional development over the past five years and then present to a board of peers. This was a rewarding process as my peer chaplains were supportive of me and encouraged me to look for additional positions where my gifts could be valued and I could continue to grow in my profession.

I am responsible for completing fifty continuing education units yearly in order to maintain my Board-Certified status. This year, I obtained these units through many webinars and other events. Events that stand out in my mind are "Talking to Children about Death," "Advanced Care Planning," "The 2025 Spirituality and Health Symposium," "The Gotto Lecture" at 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. Presbyterian Church about AI Ethics, and the "2025 Mohrenweiser Lecture: Ethics and Spiritual Care at End of Life". I also led a presentation about Chaplaincy Support to the Steering Committee on Palliative Care across the Atlantic Health System. I participated in leading a Memorial Service for those lost during the COVID pandemic at Morristown Medical Center. Lastly, for the second year in a row, I was a guest lecturer at Columbia University at a graduate level ethics class.

## **DIACONAL DIOCESAN ACTIVITIES**

I attended and read the Gospel during the Acolyte Festival at Trinity Cathedral in February. I also participated in a special celebration at Trinity Cathedral for the Order of the Diaconate. Pastor Beth drove me there and supported and celebrated my ministry.

## **REFLECTIONS: GATHERING WHAT HAS BEEN GIVEN: A TRANSITION INTO PERINATAL AND PEDIATRIC CARE CHAPLAINCY**

For thirty years, my ministry has been shaped by the bedside of adults who were dying. Hospice and palliative care formed me in the slow, sacred work of accompaniment—learning how to stay when there is nothing left to fix, how to listen for meaning when language is thin, how to honor lives that are ending without rushing them toward closure. I learned how grief unfolds over time, how love and regret often sit side by side, and how dignity is preserved not by answers but by presence.



This work did not emerge in a vacuum. It grew out of a childhood marked by chaos and trauma, an early education in vigilance, endurance, and emotional attunement. Long before I had language for pastoral care, I learned how to read rooms, anticipate danger, and protect what was fragile. Those skills were once necessary for survival. Over time, with intention and healing, they became gifts rather than wounds.

Building a life away from that early chaos was not simple or accidental. It required discernment, boundaries, and courage. I chose steadiness. I chose relationships rooted in safety rather than intensity. I chose meaning over drama. In doing so, I created a life that was not merely an escape from “the crazy,” but a reclamation of what had always been mine: calm, depth, and the ability to offer care without losing myself.

Adult hospice and palliative care chaplaincy gave me a place to bring this hard-won wisdom. The dying taught me what matters and what does not. They taught me patience. They taught me reverence. They taught me that the end of a life often clarifies its truth. Over decades, my vocation became less about doing and more about being—about holding space where fear, love, anger, and peace could coexist without judgment. The understanding that suffering is not comparative—there is no hierarchy of pain. The knowledge that families need someone who is not frightened by the depth of their fear.

Working with children and their families draws directly from my own story. I know what it is to be a child navigating an unsafe world. I know what it is to grow up too quickly. I also know what it takes to build a life that is gentle after one that was not. This does not make the work easy—but it makes it honest. I am not entering pediatrics as a rescuer or a novice, but as someone who understands how early experiences echo across a lifetime, and how healing often begins with being truly seen.

This transition is not about narrowing my vocation; it is about concentrating it. I no longer need to prove that I belong in hard places. I know how to listen. I know how to stay. I know when silence is the most faithful response. Pediatric chaplaincy asks for presence that is grounded, unhurried, and emotionally contained—qualities that only time and experience can form. There is grief here, too. Leaving familiar roles means letting go of versions of myself that carried me for many years. It means acknowledging that my ministry has an arc, that time is finite. But there is also gratitude. Nothing has been wasted. Every bedside, every story, every moment of bearing witness has prepared me for this work.

If this is a later chapter, it is not one of diminishment. It is a chapter of integration. I am bringing my whole life—its wounds and its healing, its losses and its beauty—into service of children and families who deserve care that is both tender and strong.

I am not beginning again.

I am arriving with everything I have learned.

Most importantly, I am grateful to God for placing this rare opportunity in my path and enabling me to make a choice. I am asking the people of St. Bernard’s to hold me in prayer as I begin this new chapter of my life and ministry.

## **MUSIC MINISTRY – *Tyler Weakland, Interim Director of Music***

It has been a great joy to join the spiritual community of St. Bernard’s and begin leadership of its wonderful music program! I am grateful for the help and support of our valued section leaders, as well as our willing and dedicated choir members, who each week give of their time and talent to glorify God and make our worship experiences spiritually and musically uplifting. It is a pleasure making music with everyone each week and I look forward to all that is to come.

The continued financial support of our congregation enables new musical projects and enhances worship experiences for all. A significant next step being the restoration of the non-working portions of the organ and its maintenance. We are gifted with a spectacular instrument and this work will make sure it is working to its fullest potential.

The collaboration between St. John on the Mountain continues to provide moments of combined worship that brings our larger community together. It is my hope that this bond continues to strengthen and that our music programs may grow to support each other even more in special seasons of worship.

## SAINT BERNARD'S CEMETERY – *John Smith*

For 2025, the cemetery had 14 burials, the average over the past 5 years is 15 burials per year. For 2025, the cemetery had 3 plot sales, the average over the past 5 years is 9 plot sales per year. We believe that Covid-19 had a significant impact on the increased plot sales in 2022, when the figure was 18. For 2025, the cemetery had 11 foundation sales, the average over the past 5 years is 9 foundations per year.

Thanks to Mayor Mary Jane Canose for once again organizing St. Bernard's Cemetery's participation in the Wreaths Across America Program. Thanks to the many volunteers and donors more than 150 graves of military Veterans received a wreath in December to thank them for their service to our country.

## BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS – *Taylor Hwong, Jason Robinette*

Overall, maintenance and repair costs were well-contained during the year.

### Accomplishments:

- Conducted monthly testing of emergency escape signs and lighting in both the Church and Parish House to satisfy fire code requirements
- Replaced the main boiler in the church to restore heating functionality
- Implemented temporary ceiling lighting fixes in the nave and altar areas to maintain adequate illumination for services
- Provided support to organ technicians by assembling and disassembling scaffolding, and investigated ceiling track light issues (with assistance from J. Ferrara, M. Myers, C. Thomas, Darrell Gustafson, and JW Gustafson)
- Began investigation and remediation of honeybee infestation to address safety concerns and prevent structural damage, including honey cleanup
- Installed handicap signage to ensure ADA compliance
- Performed stopgap repairs on the organ to maintain functionality pending comprehensive service
- Painted downstairs exit door, repairing weather damage and sun bleaching to improve appearance and protect the entry

### Priorities for the Coming Year:

- Continue monitoring possible water leak in Narthex wall to prevent structural damage
- Complete honeybee hive removal to eliminate ongoing infestation and prevent further damage
- Procure and install one of the sanctuary air conditioning units to improve comfort during warmer months
- Re-install the hot-water heating circulating pump (currently out for repair) to restore full heating capacity
- Replace weather stripping on the main Parish House door to improve energy efficiency and weather protection
- Replace failed track lights in sanctuary ceiling to restore proper illumination
- Repair faulty timer for exterior entry lights to ensure proper security lighting and reduce energy waste
- **Cemetery improvements:**
  - Exterior painting, slate roof repairs, and wet/dry rot rafter repairs to preserve the structure
  - Address water drainage issues to prevent further deterioration

## STEWARDSHIP – *Valerie McEntee*

Our initial goal of \$170,000 for the 2026 stewardship drive is in reach, with 41 pledges at this time totaling \$165,850. With a number of pledges still outstanding, I am sure that we will surpass that goal. Thank you to those of you who have already pledged including the two who are new pledgers this year. Every dollar pledged and received will go to help St. Bernard's community with its mission and growth. Thank you all for your generosity and support.

The 2026 year's stewardship campaign focused on the phrase "Tell out my soul." Our church has a history of parishioners talking about aspects of their faith during the initial pledge drive month each year. Thanks and appreciation

go to Denise Thomas and Greg Canose for sharing their thoughtful stories of what brings them to church on Sundays in October. As I wrote in my thank you note, I hope that it helped many focus on our own journeys in the church. I know that they brought many thoughts to my mind.

	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022
# of Pledges	41 to date	43	47	48	49
Amt. Pledged	165,850	179,076	176,770	167,056	157,403
Total Pledge/plate		205,383	209,676	164,331	166,595

As we look ahead to 2026, while we wait for some final pledging estimates to be confirmed, I do believe that we will once again come close to (and hopefully exceed) \$170,000. In particular, I want to thank those of you who have made a Stewardship pledge for the first time this year. Every cent and every dollar means that St. Bernard's Church and this congregation can continue to tell the story of our church, strengthen the Episcopal message in the area, and literally 'practice what we preach' by helping individuals and groups feel and experience the power of our faith.

If you still haven't pledged for 2026 or are new to our church and community and wish to learn more about our Stewardship, please reach out to me at [vmcentee52@gmail.com](mailto:vmcentee52@gmail.com), and I will be very happy to help answer your questions. Equally, if you know of family or friends who you think would be interested in making a financial commitment to St. Bernard's, please encourage them to contact me.

Thank you to all who have participated in this year's Stewardship program, and especially to Laura Bonamici and Pastor Beth who have played an important role in this year's program.

## EPISCOPAL COMMUNITY SERVICES OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY (ECS-NJ.org)

**We Are Stronger Together**



Episcopal Community Services of the Diocese of New Jersey (ECS-NJ) is "moving communities forward with justice, compassion, and Gospel-centered action." ECS-NJ's focus on Gospel Justice is centered around Advocacy, Education, Grantmaking, Fundraising and Prayer.

ECS-NJ can be found online at <https://ecs-nj.org>. Sign up for the ECS-NJ newsletter or learn about resources for congregations on the website. You can donate to this worthwhile effort online or by mail (see Giving Form): <https://ecs-nj.org/donate>. St. Bernard's parishioner Kirk Bonamici serves as the Treasurer for ECS-NJ. A gala with the theme "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" was held on Sept. 18, 2025, and raised almost \$82,000 to sustain and expand ECS-NJ's vital work throughout the state.

At the end of 2025, St. Bernard's and St. John on the Mountain received the first half of a \$10,000 grant from ECS-NJ for Angels' Closet, an annual event to provide essential resources for our neighbors. This allowed Angels' Closet to purchase new pillows and blankets for local families, a need that was identified by the local school district. The grant covers a 15 month period and will support 2026's event as well. ECS-NJ grants are designed to expand existing compassion and justice ministries of congregations in the diocese and make new ones possible. Projects proposed for funding should address at least two of the following objectives:

- To meet human needs in underserved and marginalized communities, especially communities of color.
- To engage, collaborate, and partner with other organizations, including faith-based, secular, community, governmental, etc.
- To encourage advocacy for issues relating to social justice, including spearheading new advocacy efforts.

In 2025, ECS-NJ augmented its regular grant program with the Sacred Space, Safe Access Grants created in partnership with the Diocese of New Jersey and supported by the Diocesan Council. This initiative provides grants for churches and justice ministries within the Diocese of NJ that serve vulnerable communities currently facing targeted fear and intimidation. The grant empowers congregations to ensure safe, welcoming spaces for worship and essential services.

St. Bernard's is honored to be one of the 24 founding congregations of Episcopal Community Services of NJ (which began in Dec. 2020). In 2024, St. Bernard's Church became a sustaining congregation of ECS-NJ through the Outreach budget line and parishioner donations. By supporting ECS-NJ with budgeted funds, our Outreach budget line has a much greater impact helping communities throughout the lower two thirds of New Jersey. Each year, congregations throughout the diocese celebrate ECS-NJ Sunday on the first Sunday of May to highlight the important ways we are partnering with God and serving God's people throughout NJ through ECS-NJ. See below for the 2025 grantees.

#### 2025 ECS-NJ Grantees

#	Congregation	County	Project	Grant purpose
1	St. John on the Mountain and St. Bernard's, Bernardsville	Somerset	Angels' Closet	A free annual "shopping event" that provides essential items to underserved residents
2	St. Stephen's, Whiting	Ocean	Freedom from Human Trafficking	An educational program expanding awareness of benefits and labor trafficking to adult populations, particularly senior citizens
3	Christo Rey, Trenton	Mercer	Summer Camp/ VBS	A week-long summer program providing safe space, fellowship, and Christian formation for underserved families
4	Christ the King, Willingboro	Burlington	Be Smart – Computer Training for Seniors	And "internet café" style training program helping to make 21 <sup>st</sup> technology more accessible to seniors
5	Christ Church, New Brunswick	Middlesex	Homeless Outreach Ministry of Christ Church (carried out through participation with Interfaith Rotating Center)	Helping to expand shelter services for unhoused men

#### 2025 Sacred Space, Safe Access Grantees

#	Congregation	County	#	Congregation	County
1	All Saints', Lakewood	Ocean	6	St. John's, Somerville	Somerset
2	St. Peter's, Perth Amboy	Middlesex	7	St. Paul's, Camden	Camden
3	Christ Church, Toms River	Ocean	8	Trinity, Asbury Park	Monmouth
4	Trinity Cathedral, Trenton	Mercer	9	Christ Church, Bordentown	Burlington
5	St. Mark's, Plainfield	Union	10	St. Stephen's, Mullica Hill	Gloucester

### CHRISTIAN FORMATION – *The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino*

Christian Formation takes many forms and is for people of all ages as we deepen our discipleship. Worship on Sundays, and Evening Prayer on Wednesdays, shapes us and our faith. A youth Confirmation Class was held during the 2024-2025 school year and into September led by Lynn Mitchell, St. John's Director of Children's Ministries, with input from Pastor Beth. Two youth from St. Bernard's participated in the class, along with five youth from St. John's. They were Confirmed during a regional service at St. Martin's, Bridgewater, on Sept. 28, 2025, by the Rt. Rev. Sally French.

Mrs. Mitchell and Pastor Beth continued to offer Sunday evening JOY! services for families with young kids in 2025, alternating parishes and offering a meal. It became apparent that the timing did not work for families. In the 2025-2026 program year, we encourage families who would like Sundays School for their Kindergarten-6<sup>th</sup> graders to participate in Sunday School with Mrs. Mitchell during the first half of the 9 am service at St. John's. Children are always welcome in any of our worship services, and a coloring table and soft toys are set up for children at St. Bernard's. In late September, Pastor Beth added a children's story during the 11 am service which seems to go over well with adults too.

The tradition of Epiphany home blessing was encouraged at both parishes with chalk blessed and prayers distributed. During Lent, a wonderful book of reflections by Forward Movement, *The Disciples' Way*, was offered to interested parishioners. And Lent Madness participation was encouraged as a way to learn about the saints of the church.

A Sanctified Art resources were used in Lent and Advent, on the themes of Everything [in] Between and What Can't Wait. People appreciate Rev. Sarah Speed's poetry prayers and liturgical language. It is a challenge that this collective has been moving away from the constraints of the lectionary, making it less useful to churches who are required to use the lectionary readings. Advent Wreath Making was offered during coffee hour on the first Sunday of Advent, Nov. 30.

A fascinating presentation on Plants of the Bible was given on June 13 in St. John's Chapel by St. John's parishioner Dorothy Smullen, a teacher/naturalist with the NJ Audubon. We also offered an essential presentation on End of life medical decisions by Beth Bertolini, hospice nurse and nurse ethicist, on June 22 at St. Bernard's. Thanks to Deacon Karen for connecting us and inviting Beth to present.

At the end of June, we hosted Cross Roads Day Camp for the first time on the theme of Holy Surprises. It took us moving the camp to St. Bernard's (in town) and dropping the price to \$50 per child per week to get a group of participants, children entering Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade, most from local Latino families. Cross Roads Day Camp is sponsored and subsidized by the St. Bernard's, St. John's, and St. Mark's. We provided lunch and snacks as well and youth volunteers helped. The Cross Roads staff were excellent and ensured the kids had a wonderful week, despite the challenge of extremely hot days and increased bee activity in church due to the heat. Families enjoyed attending the closing celebration where the 10 children helped lead all the silly songs and worship songs, having memorized the words and movements. We look forward to hosting Cross Roads Day Camp again in 2026, from July 6-10.

The annual Blessing of the Animals was held during worship on Sunday, Oct. 5, with fewer dogs in church but plenty of pets to bless in the slideshow expertly put together by Alison Davidson. This year she included photos of wild animals seen on her weekly hikes around NJ.

In recent years the Christmas Pageant has been open to children and youth of both parishes and St. John's Nursery School. This year the Pageant was held during a joint service which was a joyous occasion despite the snow.

## JOINT WORSHIP

Joint worship in 2025 included Evening Prayer on Wednesdays at 5:30 pm on Zoom, weekly in Lent and Advent, and every other week during the rest of the program year, with a break for the summer. We gather with parishioners from St. Bernard's, St. John on the Mountain, and St. Paul's, Morris Plains, where the Rev. Danielle Baker is Priest-in-charge. Each week we learn about a saint of the church and the Scripture reading reflected the saint's life. The liturgy is available on slides or can be found on our website. All are welcome, including listening while commuting or walking your dog.

We held a number of joint services with St. John on the Mountain, as well as with St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Basking Ridge, especially during Lent. Joint Sunday services are held at 10:00 am. These included:

- Sunday, Feb. 9, Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany at St. Bernard's, followed by Souper Bowl Sunday youth fundraiser for the Food Bank Network of Somerset County (\$600)
- Sunday, March 2, Last Sunday after the Epiphany at St Mark's with combined choir, followed by Shrove Sunday Pancake Breakfast
- Wednesday, March 5, Ash Wednesday, Holy Eucharist and Imposition of ashes were held at 9 am at St. Mark's, 12 pm at St. John's Chapel, and 7:30 pm at St. Bernard's with combined choir
- Thursday, April 17, Maundy Thursday Dinner Church with foot washing at St. Mark's at 6:30 pm
- Friday, April 18, Good Friday Liturgy at 12 pm (St. John's Chapel) and 6:30 pm with combined choir (St. John's)
- Saturday, April 19, Easter Vigil at 8 pm at St. Bernard's with St. Bernard's section leaders
- Sunday, June 1, Seventh Sunday of Easter outdoor Holy Eucharist at Ross Farm with St. Mark's Band and Jason Robinette. The service concluded with the annual Garden Blessing
- Sunday, June 8, Pentecost and Camp Sunday at St. Bernard's with Anthony Briggs and staff from Cross Roads
- Sunday, Sept. 14, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost at St. John's with blessing of students and teachers during worship, followed by a Fall Festival
- Sunday, Nov. 23, Last Sunday after Pentecost at St. Bernard's with combined choir and Thanksgiving altar of produce that was subsequently donated
- Sunday, Dec. 14, Third Sunday of Advent, Christmas Pageant and Eucharist with combined choir at St. John's, followed by German Christmas Advent Coffee Hour

- Friday, Dec. 19, Blue Christmas service at St. Bernard's for the 3 parishes and broader community with St. Bernard's choir
- Thursday, Dec. 24, Christmas Day at St. Bernard's for the 3 parishes
- Sunday, Dec. 28, Lessons and Carols at St. John's Chapel

## **FELLOWSHIP & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- Game Night was led by Jason Robinette monthly between February and December 2025 and attended by 9-11 people ranging in age from 12 to 87. We have a lot of fun playing collaborative games.
- St. Bernard's hosted a Vocals Concert, Shakespeare in Song, on Friday, May 2, 2025, led by Dr. Martin Sedek.
- Parishioner and VFW member Taylor Hwang was the featured speaker at Bernardsville's Memorial Day Parade this year, sharing experiences as an Army engineer in Afghanistan. Pastor Beth offered the closing benediction during the ceremony that follows the parade.
- The parish celebrated graduates with a slideshow on Sunday, June 22.
- We enjoyed celebratory coffee hours in July: ice cream social, lemonade and ice pops, and ball park theme
- A parish dinner out was held at Bistro 73 on Thursday, August 7.
- Deacon Karen participated in the diocesan celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the diaconate in Diocese of NJ on Sept. 6 with Pastor Beth attending this milestone.
- Since summer 2024, Pastor Beth has assisted the nuns at the Community of St. John Baptist in Mendham, celebrating at the 8:00 am Holy Eucharist on Saturdays or midweek, typically around twice a month. This is mutually beneficial, as she experiences the sisters' contemplative worship style as a mini-Sabbath.
- A Fall Festival was held at St. John's on Sunday, Sept. 14, following the joint 10 am service. This fun event for parishioners and the community included food, fellowship, arts and crafts and original songs on flamenco guitar by Alejo Jiménez with vocalist Sarah Aquino.
- St. Bernard's parishioners regularly attend the monthly Men's Luncheon hosted by St. John's at the Morristown Club. Pastor Beth also occasionally attends.
- In their roles as police chaplains, Pastor Beth and Pastor Dan Fenco of Somerset Hills Lutheran Church and Camino de Fe worked together to assist a local family to have a wake and funeral at St. Bernard's Church for their six-month-old daughter who died suddenly. They connected the family with Gallaway and Crane Funeral Home and Pelaggi Monuments who provided their services, the casket vault, and headstone for free. The parish donated the burial plot for the baby in St. Bernard's Cemetery along with the opening and closing fees.
- Pastor Beth participated in the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service held at Bishop Janes UMC, Basking Ridge.
- Parishioners enjoy the annual German Christmas Advent Coffee Hour at St. John's in memory of Erna Haueis, which this year followed the Christmas Pageant on Dec. 14.
- St. Bernard's parishioners attended the annual Ladies' Holiday Luncheon organized by St. John's.
- Pastor Beth attended and offered the opening prayer at the Bernardsville Police Department Awards Breakfast, in her role as police chaplain alongside Pastor Dan Fenco.
- Parishioners enjoyed the annual Advent Brunch on Sunday, Dec. 21, organized by Denise Thomas, Michelle Esposito-Edwards, and June Curtis, with carol sing-along led by Samantha Ferrara.
- Pastor Beth serves on the CiC for Prevention and Recovery Prevention Coalition representing faith leaders.
- In the Diocese of NJ, Pastor Beth is a member of the Commission on Ministry (interviewing people in the ordination process), the Reparations Commission, and Dean of the Watchung Convocation.

## **CROSS ROADS CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER, PORT MURRAY, NJ**

*The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino*

In 2025, during a joint Pentecost service at St. Bernard's, our two parishes celebrated Camp Sunday with a visit from Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center. This included a sing-along sermon from Anthony Briggs, Executive Director. Year round staff and international summer staff were in attendance and shared a song during worship as well.

We look forward to another Camp Sunday in 2026. Pastor Beth volunteered at the annual Bishops' Cup Golf Outing for Cross Roads in June, held at Copper Hill Country Club in Ringoes. This year's event will be on June 15, 2026.

In the last week of June, a team of summer staff led Cross Roads Day Camp on site at St. Bernard's, with the assistance of Lynn Mitchell, Pastor Beth, Patton Sciaino, and David Sciaino. Ten children entering Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade enjoyed a fun week of activities, games, crafts, Bible study, silly songs, faith songs. Lynn and Beth were responsible for the lunch and snacks that we provided, with Sue Kennedy providing pizza one day and Jane and Peter Mercer delivering ice cream sandwiches another day. Cross Roads Day Camp is co-sponsored and subsidized by St. Bernard's, St. John on the Mountain, and St. Mark's, Basking Ridge. We offered the Day Camp at a reduced cost of \$50 per child for the week and ensured local children could enjoy a fun week and sing the songs they learned all summer long. We will host Cross Roads Day Camp again in 2026, July 6-10.

Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center continues to be a home away from home for people of all ages where they can connect with nature, with God, and each other, through retreats, youth camp, and family camp. Open houses are scheduled for May 23 and June 6 (as well as Oct. 24) and include a tour and lunch, you can register online. If you know any college students or young adults looking for summer jobs, Cross Roads is a great place to work and grow.

In October, parishioners from both parishes helped Pastor Beth and her son David raise \$1,337 for the Rally for Cross Roads 5K Walk/Run. Thank you for your generosity over the past six years. Donations to Cross Roads Annual Fund for annual recurring needs are welcome at any time, [www.crossroadsretreat.com](http://www.crossroadsretreat.com). Your support for Cross Roads, our Episcopal and Lutheran camp and retreat center, is much appreciated.

## Outreach Reports

### OUTREACH COMMITTEE

St. Bernard's always excels in outreach and service to the community. Below is a list of outreach activities that we participate in throughout the year. We are always looking for new outreach opportunities and volunteers to help out, **so if you have a new idea or would like to participate in any Outreach Program, please speak to involved parishioners or Pastor Beth, 908-766-0153.**

Month	Outreach Activity
School Year	Our successful <b>Homework Helpers Program</b> meets on Wednesdays from 3-5 pm, volunteers are always welcome. See Homework Helpers report for details.
January	Donations to help people impacted by the wildfires in Southern California were encouraged through <b>Episcopal Relief &amp; Development</b> , <a href="http://episcopalrelief.org">episcopalrelief.org</a> .
April & Nov.	Our traditional <b>Turkey, Chicken and Ham Collections</b> were held for Easter and Thanksgiving.
May	On May 5, we celebrated <b>ECS-NJ Sunday</b> during our Sunday service.
All Year Round	Non-perishable food was collected for the <b>Food Bank Network of Somerset County Drive</b> in the recycling bin outside the church or in the Narthex. The food is then delivered to the Food Bank. In 2025 we delivered 2,556 lbs. of food to the Food Bank.
May through November	<b>God's Giving Garden</b> produced 3,860 lbs. of harvest to be delivered to various food banks and institutions. They also held a very successful <b>Honey Sale</b> . This money goes back into the Garden for next year's supplies. The Garden Blessing was held on June 1 at the end of an outdoor service.
August-Sept.	Participated in <b>International Overdose Awareness Day</b> (Aug. 31) for the fourth year in a row, hosting purple flags on our corner to represent people who died of overdoses in Somerset County in 2024. The banner for <b>Recovery Awareness Month</b> stays up for the month of September.
September	We partnered with the Somerset Hills School District and Pastor Dan Fenco of Somerset Hills Lutheran Church and Camino de Fe Lutheran Church to host a <b>school resource event for families</b> .

October	<p>Pastor Beth and David participated in the annual <b>Rally For Cross Roads Retreat &amp; Camp Center</b>, raising \$1,337 for Camp with your generous support.</p> <p>Parishioners participated in an organizing and sorting days for <b>Angels' Closet</b> in August and October.</p> <p>Watchung Convocation parishes collected donations to help <b>retire medical debt</b> for our neighbors in Navajoland (3 counties in New Mexico) and El Paso County, Texas, with Undue Medical Debt.</p>
November	<p><b>Angels' Closet</b> took place for second year on Nov. 15 and 16 at Bedwell Elementary School. Saturday was the set up day for the shopping-style event and Sunday was distribution to local families, as well as families connected to Preschool Advantage and CASA SHaW.</p> <p><b>Thanksgiving Food Drive</b> – a few creative parishioners beautifully decorated our altar with food (fresh fruits and vegetables, pumpkins, a cornucopia etc.). The food was donated to the Food Bank.</p>
December	<p>St. Bernard's Cemetery again participated in <b>Wreaths Across America</b> for the 4th year.</p> <p>Parishioners were invited to participate in the <b>Toy Drive</b> for CASA SHaW families (Court Appointed Special Advocates for children in Somerset, Hunterdon &amp; Warren Counties).</p>

### **GOD'S GIVING GARDEN – Cathy Ferrara**

This year the final harvest from God's giving garden came to 3,860 pounds. This is a bit less than the past 3 years due to a shortened growing season as a result of the rainy spring and an early October frost. All of this produce was delivered to and appreciated by the clients at the Food Bank Network of Somerset County, the Veterans at Lyon's VA Community Hope, and the local food pantry located behind Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church. To quote Jan Williams, the fearless leader of our garden:

*"With every delivery, we are reminded of the great need for fresh food among so many near us. These are our neighbors, who live in constant fear of being able to feed their families. So, every pound delivered truly is a blessing!"*

The bees were again productive and honey was harvested and bottled by many volunteers. Thank you to St. Bernard's parishioners who helped in this endeavor. Also, a great thank you to all who purchased the honey! I love that so many of you share this with family and friends!

I hope that this spring you will come to see the garden as we start to turn the soil and begin again. Volunteers are always welcome. No experience needed. We have veteran garden volunteers who are happy to teach. Our normal hours are 9 am-12 pm Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday during the growing season. Volunteers are welcome for any or all of the time. Ross Farm is also a great place for high school students and scouts to earn community service hours. There is a need for volunteers to deliver produce on harvest days. There will always be help at loading and unloading, so no worries if you are not able to lift and carry.

I am grateful to be a part of this mission, working alongside volunteers from St. Mark's, St. John on the Mountain, and the community.

### **THE COMMUNITY FUND – The Community Fund Committee and Pastor Beth**

The mission of the Community Fund is to provide emergency financial assistance in the greater Somerset Hills area. The grants—up to \$3,000—are given on a one-time basis for a specific need. The current balance in the Community Fund is approximately \$6,000.00.

In 2025, the Community Fund was able to give four grants:

- Furnace repairs for a senior citizen (\$1,600)
- A month's rent for a single mother who lives and works in Bernardsville (\$1,900)
- Required vaccinations so a child could attend kindergarten in the Somerset Hills School District (\$300)
- Lunch for families at a September event held at Kiwanis Park connecting parents of students who qualify for reduced-cost or free meals with resources in the Somerset Hill School District and other local nonprofit (\$550)



The first two grants were a result of St. Bernard's parishioners hearing about a situation where the Community Fund could be of assistance and suggesting that the people apply. For the other two, Pastor Beth coordinated the Somerset Hills School District and Pastor Dan Fenco of Somerset Hills Lutheran Church and Camino de Fe.

The Community Fund receives grant requests from credible sponsors such as clergy, schools, social workers, nonprofits, and police on behalf of an individual or family. All the grant applications are confidential. As noted above, we welcome referrals from parishioners who know of situations where the Community Fund could help.

If you have referrals or questions, please contact: Anne Fritts, Pam Hull, Mindy Kirby, Valerie McEntee, or Pastor Beth.

## **HOMEWORK HELP AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

YMCA Homework Helpers at St. Bernard's began in October. Running our program this year is Pricilla Miller, mother of one of our incredible tutors, who recently retired from her full-time job. The program works closely with Bedwell Elementary and Bernardsville Middle School counselors and is supported by the Greater Somerset County YMCA. At present, we have 11 tutees from grades 2-8 with whom we work Wednesdays from 3-5:00 pm. Our tutors, vetted by the YMCA, include students from Bernardsville and Basking Ridge high schools and local adults. We continue to supply healthy snacks for both tutees and tutors. Every Wednesday we give thanks for the generosity of our St. Bernard's family, providing us a safe and beautiful space to help these eager students learn and dream and know they are loved.

## **ANGELS' CLOSET**

For the second year in a row, parishioners from both parishes solicited gently used donations of clothing, coats, household goods, toys, and other essentials for local families in need. We also collected brand new clothing for children and adults, toiletries, diapers, and baby wipes. Angels' Closet applied for and received a \$10,000 grant from Episcopal Community Services of NJ. This was used in part to purchase pillows and blankets for families, a need identified by our contacts with the school district. The grant covers a 15 month time period and will also support the 2026 Angels' Closet.

School district families who qualify for free and reduced lunch, and families supported by partner nonprofits, Preschool Advantage and CASA SHaW, were invited to come for the shopping-style distribution event on Sunday, Nov. 16, at Bedwell Elementary School where all items were free of charge. Led by St. John's Outreach co-chair Kathy Tober, parishioners from both parishes, community members, and student volunteers made the event possible. Despite concerns about immigration enforcement decreasing attendance, well over 100 people came to find clothing, household goods, and toys for their families. The 25% of donations that remained were packed up and distributed through food pantries in Dunellen, Bound Brook, and Plainfield, by a VA volunteer who helped all day long on Nov. 16 before loading his truck with donations. Thank you to all of the volunteers from the parishes and broader community.

## **WATCHUNG CONVOCATION: RETIRING MEDICAL DEBT**

In 2025, the 16 congregations of the Watchung Convocation of the Diocese of NJ set a goal of raising \$10,000 to help pay off bundled medical debt. Medical debt is one of the leading causes of bankruptcy in the US. Existing medical debt also prevents people from seeking the help they need to stay healthy. In NJ, the state used leftover federal Covid relief funds to work with Undue Medical Debt to retire \$1 billion of medical debt for NJ residents.

We initially sought to assist in West Virginia, but that debt was spoken for. Instead, we looked West and pooled our resources to buy medical debt for pennies on the dollar to give relief to people in Navajoland (3 counties in New Mexico) and El Paso County, TX. A donation of \$1 retires \$100 of medical debt. St. Bernard's parishioners generously donated \$3,375.

Thanks to this combined and inspired effort, our Convocation raised over \$33,000 to partner with Undue Medical Debt and help people in New Mexico and Texas. This means \$3.3 million dollars of medical debt will be retired. The debt is bundled and there are income requirements – people cannot directly apply. People will receive a letter informing them that they've been released from the burden of their medical debt. If you would still like to contribute, you donate via

check or online: <https://unduemedicaldebt.org/campaign/episcopal-diocese-of-new-jersey/> . Most churches and individuals gave via check which is not reflected in the online total. We give thanks to God who helps us do more than we can ask or imagine.

## **PASTORAL CARE**

Parishioners Jenny Moss and Meg McKee are now coordinating Pastoral Care outreach in the form of cards, calls, or emails to parishioners in connection with Pastor Beth. For Christmas they delivered 10 loaf cakes from Wightman Farms and cards to St. Bernard's parishioners who might benefit, and they were very gratefully received. If you would like to support their efforts, please speak to Jenny or Meg or reach out to Alison Davidson in the Parish office to be connected, [admin@StBernardsNJ.org](mailto:admin@StBernardsNJ.org) or 908-340-6641.

## **Guilds' Reports**

### **ALTAR GUILD**

The Altar Guild of St. Bernard's is responsible for preparing the altar for services every Sunday and for all ceremonies performed in the church. The members are also responsible for the care and cleaning of the sacred articles used during the services. We are actively seeking additional members.

We invite all parishioners to consider assisting once a month in this vital service to the parish. Membership is open to all – male and female and any age. The current Guild members are Mary Kempen, Betsy Klausing, Valerie McEntee, Frank and June Curtis, Carmen Paul, and Cathy Ferrara. If interested, call Mary Kempen at 908-766-3632.

### **FLOWER GUILD**

The Flower Guild at St. Bernard's arranges for flowers to be on the altar at Christmas, Palm Sunday, and Easter Sunday. Flowers are usually purchased for the altar from September through June for all services, except for Lent. Our Greening Team, led by Anne Fritts, greened the church for Christmas with beautiful poinsettias and wreaths.

At Thanksgiving our altar was fabulously adorned with an overflowing cornucopia and the altar beautifully decorated with seasonal fresh produce by Beth Gustafson and Meg McKee, all of which was then donated to the Food Bank of Somerset County. This year the produce for the Thanksgiving altar was donated by Mindy and Ned Kirby.

If you wish to donate flowers in honor of your family or friends or in memory of a deceased loved one, please contact our Parish Administrator or sign up on the Flower dedication clip board. A dedication will be included in the service bulletin for the chosen Sunday of your dedication. The suggested donation for flowers is \$75. Carmen Paul kindly delivers the flowers to the VA hospital to be enjoyed by patients and staff. If interested in helping or being on the guild, call the Parish Office at 908-340-6641 for additional information.

### **CHALICIST GUILD – *Mary Kempen***

In 2025, St. Bernard's Church continued the setup of having two chalices during Holy Communion. Parishioners, if they wanted, could sip from the silver chalice. This was in addition to the use of a ceramic cup for intinction. Chalicists come up from their pews to assist the priest and deacon at the time of Communion and then return to their pews after Communion is concluded. There is no need to vest except for special feast days. The chalicists who served during 2025 are Mary Jane Canose, Mary Kempen, Denise Thomas and Pam Kenworthy.

We would welcome any interest parties – men or women – who would like to be a part of the Eucharist celebration. Please speak with Mary Kempen.

# Financials

## TREASURER'S REPORT – *Michael Myers*

### Summary of 2025 results vs. 2025 budget

**Church:** Last January we had a failure of our boiler, and in the fall we were critically short of cash, so for both events we dipped into our investment accounts. By the end of the year, almost all our other expenses were at or below budget, and our donations via pledge and plate came in strong so we concluded with more than two months of cash on hand going into 2026.

**Cemetery:** Lot sales tend to be irregular year to year, and this year we were on the low side. Rental income was also below expectations so total income was \$30K below budget. We compensated by deferring maintenance on roads and trees, so ended the year only slightly unfavorable.

### Looking Forward for 2026

#### **Church:**

- We budgeted for pledges based on pledge drive responses
- We have budgeted for extra HVAC work, and \$5K for bee remediation, but still believe that upkeep will be lower than 2025 because of the boiler replacement costs last year.
- Most of our other expenses continue to creep up, but we enter the year with a strong cash position so we believe the pull from investments will be only \$20K.

**Cemetery:** The cemetery has built up an operational reserve of about \$135K due to strong results in 2022 and 2024. That allows us to budget for some expenses above annual revenue this coming year:

- We budgeted for revenues based on the average of the last four years.
- We budgeted for 6 months of cottage rent.
- We anticipate more than average road work and cottage maintenance

# BUDGETS – Michael Myers

## CHURCH BUDGET

### Annual Report - St. Bernard's Episcopal Church 2017 Actual - 2026 Budget: Annual Operating Plan - Summary

CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	% of Budget
<b>REVENUE</b>											
PLEDGES/PLATE OFF.	\$137,767	\$143,312	\$148,337	\$152,441	\$171,820	\$166,594	\$164,331	\$209,676	\$205,383	\$185,000	61%
GIFTS AND DONATIONS	\$14,928	\$16,291	\$3,995	\$4,523	\$9,898	\$3,170	\$3,090	(\$5,013)	\$2,931	\$2,000	1%
OTHER INCOME	\$58,945	\$41,679	\$37,679	\$13,572	\$37,979	\$17,126	\$28,463	\$39,324	\$44,042	\$42,000	14%
<b>Total Income from Operations</b>	<b>\$211,639</b>	<b>\$201,282</b>	<b>\$190,011</b>	<b>\$170,536</b>	<b>\$219,697</b>	<b>\$186,891</b>	<b>\$195,884</b>	<b>\$243,988</b>	<b>\$252,356</b>	<b>\$229,000</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>											
CLERGY	\$81,064	\$88,541	\$83,352	\$95,977	\$91,930	\$98,379	\$96,587	\$70,612	\$68,371	\$70,959	23%
INSURANCE	\$31,791	\$27,598	\$24,600	\$25,736	\$27,144	\$28,684	\$25,438	\$32,674	\$32,235	\$35,550	12%
CHRISTIAN EDUCATE	\$578	\$1,528	\$168	\$1,766	\$1,707	\$1,046	\$479	\$1,197	\$2,020	\$2,650	1%
MUSIC PROGRAM COST	\$38,741	\$38,898	\$40,175	\$36,732	\$36,457	\$39,782	\$42,558	\$40,393	\$39,834	\$49,853	16.3%
Less: Music Restricted Gifts	(\$10,930)	(\$12,635)	(\$14,005)	(\$10,630)	(\$9,780)	(\$11,450)	(\$7,320)	(\$9,174)	(\$3,028)	(\$5,000)	-1.6%
MUSIC EXPENSE TO OPERATING	\$27,811	\$26,263	\$26,170	\$26,102	\$26,677	\$28,332	\$35,238	\$31,219	\$36,806	\$44,853	15%
ALTAR SUPPLIES	\$1,707	\$4,093	\$5,526	\$1,920	\$2,873	\$3,585	\$3,579	\$3,592	\$3,519	\$3,524	1%
PARISH LIFE & MISSION	\$12,728	\$16,006	\$19,864	\$23,492	\$26,313	\$25,543	\$31,402	\$26,510	\$31,677	\$33,600	11%
ADMINISTRATION	\$35,639	\$48,633	\$59,129	\$47,967	\$59,053	\$64,426	\$53,763	\$70,345	\$73,258	\$78,105	26%
PROPERTY UPKEEP	\$69,756	\$53,077	\$62,285	\$30,774	\$28,940	\$29,696	\$33,167	\$14,788	\$45,721	\$36,244	12%
<b>Total Church Operating Expense</b>	<b>\$261,073</b>	<b>\$265,739</b>	<b>\$281,094</b>	<b>\$253,734</b>	<b>\$264,637</b>	<b>\$279,690</b>	<b>\$279,653</b>	<b>\$250,937</b>	<b>\$293,607</b>	<b>\$305,486</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Investment Return to Operating</b>			<b>\$ 76,000</b>	<b>\$ 30,000</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>\$80,000</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$74,913</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>NET INCOME-(LOSS) Church</b>	<b>(\$49,434)</b>	<b>(\$64,457)</b>	<b>(\$15,083)</b>	<b>(\$53,198)</b>	<b>\$20,060</b>	<b>\$7,201</b>	<b>(\$3,769)</b>	<b>\$13,051</b>	<b>\$33,662</b>	<b>(\$56,486)</b>	<b>-18%</b>

Investment Return to Operating  
as % of OPERATING EXPENSE:

27% 12% 25% 36% 29% 8% 26% 7%

## CEMETERY BUDGET

### Annual Report - St. Bernard's Cemetery 2017 Actual - 2026 Budget: Annual Operating Plan - Summary

CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	% of Budget
<b>REVENUE</b>											
INVESTMENT INCOME	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,516	\$12,855	\$26,046	\$26,089	\$26,000	17%
COTTAGE RENTAL	\$16,775	\$18,050	\$16,000	\$19,200	\$19,200	\$19,200	\$19,200	\$20,350	\$0	\$15,000	10%
MISC DONATIONS	\$300	\$1,905	\$80	\$10,900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500	\$0	\$0	0%
LOT SALES & SERVICES	\$36,070	\$37,078	\$50,796	\$51,894	\$58,808	\$104,296	\$52,863	\$83,180	\$51,480	\$70,140	45%
<b>Total Income from Operations</b>	<b>\$53,145</b>	<b>\$57,033</b>	<b>\$66,876</b>	<b>\$81,994</b>	<b>\$78,008</b>	<b>\$134,012</b>	<b>\$84,918</b>	<b>\$130,076</b>	<b>\$77,569</b>	<b>\$111,140</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>											
ADMINISTRATION	\$12,173	\$12,275	\$12,100	\$12,599	\$18,949	\$23,685	\$29,548	\$40,278	\$42,798	\$68,627	44%
PROPERTY UPKEEP	\$29,802	\$37,578	\$34,910	\$40,894	\$38,090	\$23,606	\$58,878	\$48,537	\$40,038	\$80,471	52%
CEMETERY SALE EXPENSES	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0%
CEMETERY SERVICES EXPENSE	\$3,351	\$4,552	\$7,361	\$8,575	\$8,887	\$6,965	\$5,900	\$4,547	\$2,524	\$5,872	4%
<b>Total Cemetery Operating Exp</b>	<b>\$45,326</b>	<b>\$54,405</b>	<b>\$54,371</b>	<b>\$62,068</b>	<b>\$65,926</b>	<b>\$54,256</b>	<b>\$94,326</b>	<b>\$93,362</b>	<b>\$85,360</b>	<b>\$154,970</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>NET OPERATING INC (LOSS)</b>	<b>\$7,819</b>	<b>\$2,628</b>	<b>\$12,505</b>	<b>\$19,926</b>	<b>\$12,082</b>	<b>\$79,756</b>	<b>(\$9,408)</b>	<b>\$36,714</b>	<b>(\$7,791)</b>	<b>(\$43,830)</b>	<b>-28%</b>

## FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

The Parish Register of St. Bernard's Episcopal Church indicates 80 active households. If you became a member of St. Bernard's Church and have not requested a letter of transfer from your previous congregation, please speak to our Parish Administrator, Alison Davidson, who can assist in officially transferring your membership to St. Bernard's. (This is not required.) If you would like to be Received into the Episcopal Church, or Confirmed, please speak with Pastor Beth.

### ✦ 2025 Official Acts

Baptisms	2
Confirmed	2
Received	0
Marriages*	8
Funerals/Committal Services	5

### ✦ 2025 Worship Services

Total Number of Services	99
Eucharistic Services	56 (including 3 Communion from the Reserved Sacrament)
Daily Office:	
Evening Prayer	23
Sunday Morning Prayer	1

Private/Home Communion	
Other	19

*Included in the Other category this year are the Blue Christmas service, JOY! services, Lessons & Carols, and Pastoral services (Funerals or Committals, Holy Matrimony, Prayers with one who is dying) that were not a Eucharistic service or Daily Office.*

\* In 2025, I officiated at 14 marriages, a record annual number. There are already 5 weddings on the calendar for 2026, and 2 for 2027. It's countercultural to get married in church in the Northeast, so it's a blessing that couples are making this choice. And I really enjoy getting to know couples through marriage preparation and planning their marriage liturgies. However, I realize that there is not enough time in the year for me to officiate at a similar number of weddings again. Requests continue to come into both parishes, and I will pray for a solution. I will reach out to Episcopal colleagues to see if any are interested in preparing couples and officiating at St. Bernard's or St. John on the Mountain. – Pastor Beth

### GOOD NEWS!

After three months as our Interim Director of Music, we are delighted to share that Tyler Weakland is now St. Bernard's Episcopal Church's Director of Music. We are grateful for Tyler's leadership of the choir and beautiful musicianship on organ and piano – all of which brings us closer to God and the Body of Christ of which we are all apart. Together may we “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 96:9a).



### **Clergy and Staff**

The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino, *Rector*  
The Rev. Karen Burke Lewis, *Deacon*  
Tyler Weakland, *Director of Music*  
Alison Davidson, *Parish Administrator*

### **Wardens and Vestry**

Christopher Thomas, Valerie McEntee, *Wardens*  
Michael Myers, *Treasurer*, Meg McKee *Clerk*  
Anne Fritts, Mindy Kirby  
Meg McKee, Jennifer Moss,  
Michael Myers, Jason Robinette

*Please use the phone numbers below to reach the parish. This past year, our longtime parish phone number was co-opted and our phone provider doesn't have an easy avenue to reclaim the number.*

## **ST. BERNARD'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

88 Claremont Road, Bernardsville, New Jersey 07924

908-340-6641 or 908-766-0153

[www.StBernardsNJ.org](http://www.StBernardsNJ.org)