

The Annual Meeting
of
Saint Bernard's
Episcopal Church



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

January 28, 2024

Parish Hall

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Agenda for 2024 Annual Meeting of 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 Rauen Sciaino*
- **Wardens' Report** (3 min.), *Chris Thomas and Paul Edwards, Wardens*
- **2023 Annual Meeting Minutes for Approval** (2 min.) -- see p. 4

Opening of Polls

- **Nominations** (2 min.)
 - a. Wardens and Vestry

For Warden – vote for two Paul Edwards (<i>for 1 year term</i>) For Vestry Members – vote for two Jenny Moss (<i>2nd 3 year term</i>) Pam Hull (<i>1st 3 year term</i>)	Chris Thomas (<i>for 2 year term</i>) Michael Myers (<i>1 year term</i>)
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- b. Deputies and Alternate to 2024 Diocesan Convention, March 9, 2024, and Nov./Dec. 2024

For the Office of Deputy to Diocesan Convention – vote for three Chris Thomas Valerie McEntee Pam Hull
For Alternate to Diocesan Convention – vote for one Carmen Paul

- c. Delegates to 2024 Watchung Convocation

For the Office of Delegate to the Watchung Convocation – vote for four Greg Canose Mary Jane Canose Valerie McEntee Jane Rauen

Reports, part 2

- **Finance Presentation** (4 min.), *Michael Myers, Treasurer*
- **Stewardship Report** (2 min.), *Paul Edwards, Stewardship Chair*
- **General Question and Answer period** (3 min.)

WOW! cards – individual reflection, small group conversation, report out to larger group

- **Personal reflection time to write on a WOW! card. Perhaps an idea you've been prayerfully considering or something the Spirit offers you today that connects with your passion(s).** (3 min.)
- **Take time for those who would like to share their ideas at the table to do so. Listen for the idea that gets the most traction and interest in helping. Together agree on one to present to the larger group.** (8 min.)
 - *After the meeting we will collect all WOW cards that people would like to submit.*
- **Share one WOW! idea per table with the larger group.** (8 min.)
- **Vote with our feet.** (3 min.) *Which of these ideas that will make Jesus say "WOW!" are you interested in helping become a reality this year?*
- **Declaration of Election and Introductions** (2 min.) *Newly elected and continuing Wardens and Vestry*
- **New Business** (2 min.)
- **Closing Dismissal from Deacon Karen & Adjournment**

ST. BERNARD'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 29, 2023, in person and via Zoom

- Call to Order and Opening Prayer.
- Rector's Welcome
- Thanks for many individuals who bring St. Bernard's Church to where we are today.
- Warden's Report
- Paul Edwards highlights the report which he and Chris Thomas submitted. 2022 was the year that we started getting back to some form of normality. The positives that came out of 2022 were the success of on-line worship for many and getting back to our outreach programs. Engagement with starting the discussions on Affiliation was significant. Happy to welcome Deacon Karen.
- Approval of Annual Meeting Minutes
- Nominations
- For Warden: Paul Edwards
 - For Vestry: Meg McKee and Michael Myers
- Deputies : Jenny Moss, Carmen Paul and Chris Thomas and Alternate to Convention : Michael Myers
- Delegates to 2023 Watchung Convention : Greg Canose, Mary Jane Canose, Beth Gustafson and Jane Rauen
- Reports
- Finance: Michael Myers reports that we have two things going on at St. Bernard's Church. 1. A small vibrant community in worship and outreach which we do economically and using the generosity of past members and current members. 2. We juggle how to pay our staff a fair wage and pay expenses and keep a budget. A planned giving campaign will be starting.
- Stewardship : Paul Edwards thanks everyone. Pledges are at \$163,000. Our commitment is to make sure the money is well spent and cared for.
- Affiliation focused conversation
- The Affiliation Process is presented in the report.
- Reflections from Anne Fritts, Jenny Moss and Michael Myers.
- Breakout groups :
- Share in larger group :
- Declaration of Election and Introductions
- New Business
- Closing Prayer & Adjournment

Respectfully submitted, Linda Engleby, Clerk



St. BERNARD'S CHURCH

Annual Meeting Election Ballot – January 28, 2024

For Wardens* – vote for two

- Paul Edwards (*1 year term*) Chris Thomas (*2 year term*)

For Vestry Members – vote for three

- Jenny Moss (*2nd 3 year term*) Michael Myers (*1 year term in order to
continue serving as Treasurer*)
 Pam Hull (*1st 3 year term*)

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

- Chris Thomas Valerie McEntee
 Pam Hull

For Alternate to Diocesan Convention – vote for one

- 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:

3rd year of 2nd term: Linda Engleby, Taylor Hwong

3rd year of 1st term: Anne Fritts

2nd year of 1st term: Meg McKee

Rotating off Vestry: Beth Gustafson, Mary Kempen

**Wardens: Chris Thomas has served for 3 years, Paul Edwards has served for 2 years*

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

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

In 2023, the parish of St. Bernard's Church celebrated its 125th anniversary. Thank you all for being a part of St. Bernard's Episcopal Church's anniversary year. I am grateful to Anne Fritts and Denise Thomas for chairing the anniversary team and helping us celebrate authentically. Since its early years, the parish has been orientated to caring for the broader community in which we are situated. This led us to conceive of the Service of thanksgiving held on November 19. We invited a wide range of community members who voluntarily and professionally contribute to the life of Bernardsville. Many volunteers from the Pop-up Food Pantry hosted in our new Parish House in 2020 attended. Those who weren't available to attend appreciated being invited and recognized for their involvement in the life of Bernardsville. Music is central to our faith and connection with God and one another, and so the Service of thanksgiving was 85% music, 5% liturgy, and 10% stated gratitude on your behalf. We are indebted to guest musician Ed Alstrom and soloists Samantha Ferrara and Jason Robinette for helping us express our gratitude to all who were present. The October 20 choir concert, two receptions, and Movie outing rounded out the anniversary celebrations in ways that welcomed the broader community and celebrated our community of faith's 125 years. May we all continue being generous with our lives.

Another major event in 2023 was St. Bernard's affiliation with the Church of St. John on the Mountain, just 3.2 miles up the mountain in Bernardsville. Affiliation is a model being used throughout the Diocese of New Jersey in recognition that we may find synergy together, and congregations cannot always afford full-time clergy while clergy often need full-time positions. In most cases, the two congregations engaging in an affiliation process together are both without clergy. In that scenario, once they commit to affiliating, the two congregations embark on a priest-in-charge search together to call a new priest for the three-year time commitment of the affiliation. Our affiliation differs in that I was in place, having served St. Bernard's for eight years. I arrived as a Priest-in-charge in mid-November 2015 and with your commitment and the Vestry's election became rector in June 2020. In this affiliation, St. John's was open to me serving as their priest as well.

While the two parishes remain independent, the hope is that creative and strategic opportunities will unfold as we live into being the Episcopal Church in Bernardsville together. I hope you saw this in action during the Advent and Christmas seasons. I am very grateful to the Steering Committee, Laura Bonamici, Greg Canose, Meg McKee, Jenny Moss, and from St. John's, Joy Baird, Shellie Iossa, Peter Mercer, and Michael Mitchell, for their wonderful work in developing the Memorandum of Understanding over the summer so that this affiliation could begin Oct. 1, following the votes of both Vestries and parishes. With the size of the parishes and the spacing of the Sunday morning schedule, I have found the new reality of affiliation to be an energizing opportunity for my mutual ministry among you and the broader community. Affiliation helps us reduce St. Bernard's annual deficit significantly. This affiliation allows me to stay at St. Bernard's longer, as serving two parishes provides flexibility to respond to weekly events more than serving in another part-time position would. I am very grateful to the Rev. Karen Burke Lewis, Deacon, for her worship leadership among us.

I am thankful to the Wardens, Vestry, and Staff and all of you who enliven the Christian community of St. Bernard's with your outreach, singing, participation, care, and fellowship. I lift up Sue Smith and her life and ministry here. At the time of her death in June, Sue was the director of the Altar Guild, on Vestry, administrator of the Community Fund, and organizer with the Flower Guild, a founding tutor of Homework Helpers, and more. She embodied her love for people and God and fierce advocacy for those in need in so many ways. And Sue was a really fun, joyful, kind, and shining person. At her funeral in July, I reflected on the poetry of Hymn 293, "I sing a song of the saints of God." The third stanza reads: "They lived not only in ages past, there are hundreds of thousands still, the world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus' will. You can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea, in church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea, for the saints of God are just folk like me, and I mean to be one too." The Lord calls us to fully live into our faith and partner with the Trinity to transform our corner of God's world. I am grateful that we all met one of God's bright and joyous saints in Sue and that we carry her faith, passion, and love within us. May we be guided by Sue's generous spirit and wisdom in our future as the Episcopal Church in Bernardsville.



The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino, Rector

WARDENS' REPORT – *Christopher Thomas, Paul Edwards*

For St. Bernard's Church, 2023 was another exciting year. In addition, to our regular worship and community service, the parish community approved an Affiliation with St. John on the Mountain. This is a formal 3-year agreement, where the two churches will remain separate, but will share clergy costs, saving both parishes significantly. We have agreed to 3 Sunday services at the two churches, 7:30 am and 9:00 am at St. John's and 11:00 am at St. Bernard's, moving our regular service time back one hour. This schedule allows Beth to celebrate all three services, ensuring she has fellowship time with both churches at their coffee hours. Thus far, both parishes have adjusted well to the new schedules, and it has provided additional worship flexibility at times for both organizations.

In addition to the financial benefits, we are already starting to see increased collaboration between the two parishes. We were invited to a joint service with combined choirs in December, followed by a German Christmas Advent coffee hour. It was great to reconnect with their parishioners and enjoy fabulous food and fellowship. We are planning a joint service at St. Bernard's on April 14 to reciprocate. 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.

Finally, we would like to thank the affiliation Steering Committee members – Jenny Moss, Meg McKee, Greg Canose and Laura Bonamici– who worked long and hard to work out the details of the Memorandum of Understanding, which outlined the terms of the affiliation and was ratified by the Vestries and congregations of both parishes, as well as the diocese. All 4 are continuing to serve to monitor the continuing affiliation process and make sure everything runs smoothly.

The other major event in 2023 was the celebration of St. Bernard's 125th anniversary. This was marked by a series of events managed by Anne Fritts and Denise Thomas. More details of the activities and accomplishments are listed further in this report.

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 4,000 pounds of food for the Food Bank and Veterans. In addition, the Homework Helpers, under the leadership of Cindy McWilliams, 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 semi-annual ham, chicken, and turkey collection. Fellowship also returned, with regular coffee hours and the second year of our Advent Brunch managed by Denise Thomas, Jenny Moss, 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 2024 budget will include a deficit. However, due to the increases in the stock market, our overall investment balances were not reduced by the amount we withdrew to fund the 2023 deficit. In 2024, 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 2023, we celebrated the second year of Deacon Karen Lewis's service to St. Bernard's, as she assisted Pastor Beth in worship. This was also the third year Dr. Martin Sedek led the music program and our choral section leaders provided wonderful musical leadership and offerings. Alison Davidson continued to serve and help the congregation to worship together on-site and online through Zoom in spiritually rewarding and meaningful ways. We are again extremely grateful to John Smith, Michael Myers, and Kurt Bonamici, who supported the St Bernard's Cemetery, saving us additional salary cost in the process. We also thank our great team of Taylor Hwong and Tom Brooks, who continued managing our Building and Grounds.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your wardens in 2023. It is our hope and prayer that 2024 will bring all of you, your loved ones, and the communities you serve good health, great blessings, and many opportunities.

AFFILIATION UPDATE

The three-year affiliation between St. Bernard's Episcopal Church and the Church of St. John on the Mountain officially began on Sunday, Oct. 1, with the new service schedule (see Warden's report above). St. John's parishioners attended St. Bernard's 125th Anniversary Service of thanksgiving on Nov. 19, St. John's hosted a joint service on Dec. 10, and the parishes shared a Christmas Eve/Day schedule. More shared worship is anticipated for Lent 2024, along with St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Basking Ridge. On April 14, St. Bernard's will host a joint service. The Steering Committee is transitioning to serve as a space to check in with the affiliation and generate or consider creative opportunities to collaborate.

DEACON'S REPORT – *The Rev. Karen Burke Lewis, Deacon*

YEARLY SUMMARY

2023 was the first full year of my appointment to St. Bernard's as your vocational deacon. I have had a good year of healing and I am better able to identify my call to serve the dying without apology. I have been attending spiritual direction which is assisting me in the healing process and it is giving me permission for pause and self-care. I am appreciative of the people in the parish for their welcoming and supportive spirit. During the course of the year, I have been serving during Sunday worship and have preached 10 times.

SECULAR EMPLOYMENT

PALLIATIVE CARE CHAPLAIN AT CHILTON MEDICAL CENTER IN POMPTON PLAINS

I serve as the Board-Certified Palliative Care Chaplain at Chilton Medical Center in Pompton Plains. This is a full-time position where I am contracted for the hours of 7 am-3 pm, Monday through Friday. Since the spring, I have been working a second per diem position, where I stay later on an as needed basis. I work on a team that is comprised of two Advanced Nurse Practitioners, a Medical Social Worker, and myself. As their chaplain, I am responsible for providing a specialist level of expertise in assessing the spiritual and existential needs of patients and families and the delivery of interventions, including active listening, pastoral counseling, crisis mediation, education, prayer and support. I am an active member of the ethics committee. I also provide supportive services for staff through debriefings after traumatic events as well as one on one counseling and assistance with the moral injury and compassion fatigue. In addition, I am responsible for creating education events that help to inform the staff of the role of the chaplain and spiritual care in the healthcare setting. This year I have co-led three education events: Deciding When Hospice is Needed, Hospice Basics and Benefits, and Palliative Care vs. Curative Care. I also provide bereavement services to the families of patients who have died.

In order to maintain my board-certification status, I am responsible for completing fifty continuing education units per year. I obtained these units through many webinars and other events. One project that I was a part of was through the Summit Film Society and Your Decisions Matter (a group devoted to providing education on choices at end of life). There was a viewing of the movie "The Farewell" which is about a Chinese American family who returns to China under the guise of a fake wedding to stealthily say goodbye to their beloved matriarch (who is the only person that doesn't know she only has a few weeks left to live). There were then presentations from different panelists (a MSW, a Physician, a Bio-Ethicist, and this Palliative Care Chaplain) leading presentations based on their discipline and then co-facilitating discussions with the audience. My presentation was titled "Understanding Grief within a Cultural Context".

I also participated in 3-day long bio-ethics training sessions. One was titled "Ethics in Action: At the Bedside" and it included a presentation by Jeanne Kerwin, DMH-HEC-C. The presentation enabled me to be able to recognize the history of healthcare ethics and how it integrates into the delivery of healthcare, to understand the consultation framework using the four principles in healthcare ethics, and to explore cases where ethics is useful in determining appropriate medical care.

I am pleased to say that I have raised the funds to purchase the "Essentials of Palliative Care Chaplaincy", which is an eight-week long and 64-hour instruction course that begins in February. This course is required in order to become an

Advanced Practice Chaplain with Board-Certification in Hospice and Palliative Care. Following the eight-week course, I will need the rest of the year to complete all the essays and submit them and hopefully sit before the board in the spring of 2025.

DIACONAL DIOCESAN ACTIVITIES

I participated in the service of the installation of our new bishop which included a rehearsal the week before. There was no deacon retreat this year and our annual deacon day was postponed until January 13, 2024. I have been attending monthly Zoom meetings involving all the chaplains in the diocese. These meetings are facilitated by Fr. Alan Leonard and they provide an opportunity for all the chaplains to know each other and support each other. We are hoping to raise the awareness of chaplaincy care with the hopes of it being recognized as a credible ministry to the diocese.

REFLECTIONS

I am so honored to be among you. I am grateful that the parish, under the leadership of Pastor Beth, has provided me with a safe place to live out my diaconal calling and are willing to validate the extensive ministry I am involved in to those who are at the end of life.

MUSIC MINISTRY – *Dr. Martin Sedek, Music Director*

The St. Bernard's music program continues to enjoy the return to full normalcy with a very "business as usual" year. Our church family is enjoying the full benefit of our extremely capable choir as they enrich our worship each Sunday morning. We continue to be fortunate to host our professional section leaders: Samantha, Devin, Jason, and Debi. All members of the music program, both artistic and administrative, have been instrumental in allowing us to continue having our worship lifted even higher by music.

This year our music program was in full force in celebration of our 125th anniversary year with a choral music concert in collaboration with singers from All Saints', Millington. Our choir and section leaders presented choral and solo music from across the ages of sacred music, in a fun and successful performance.

St. Bernard's continues to be a beautiful venue for performances. My professional vocal collective Vocala delighted audiences in November, we hosted an organ recital and a student film, and my wife Eileen has presented two of her studio recitals in our beautiful space, with a third around the corner.

We continue our mission of raising funds for our crucial music program with both annual appeals and special appeals for occasions that arise. The continued generosity of members of our St. Bernard's family has allowed us to continue creating music at a high artistic level for the benefit of all, and I trust that we will continue in this spirit in the year to come.

SAINT BERNARD'S CEMETERY – *John Smith*

For 2023, the cemetery had 13 burials, the average over the past 8 years is 15 burials per year. For 2023, the cemetery had 7 plot sales, the average over the past 8 years is 7 lot sales per year. We believe that COVID-19 was an influence in the increased plot sales in 2022 when the figure was 18. For 2023, the cemetery had 7 foundation sales, the average over the past 8 years is 8 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. Our Honored Veteran this year was Alan G. Rollins. Thanks to the many volunteers and donors, 120 Veterans' graves received a wreath in December to thank them for their service to our country.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS – Tom Brooks, Taylor Hwong

Overall, maintenance and repair costs were fairly well contained during the year. Accomplishments by the “Buildings and Grounds” included:

- Conducting monthly tests of emergency escape signs/lighting in both the Church and Parish House to satisfy fire code requirements.
- Cleaning the church gutter, rather than contracting with vendor to perform the task.
- Warranty replacement of 49 folding chairs.
- Investigating POTS (plain old telephone) charges related to both administrative and emergency notification purposes, resulting in contract changes that significantly reduced costs.
- Repairing Narthex door that would not close properly.
- Refurbishing the main Cemetery sign.
- Installing a key box at the Cemetery to satisfy fire department access requirements.
- Assisting with replacement of shrubs around church property.
- Resolving an electrical short at the Cemetery cottage.

Work for the coming year will include resolving a number of issues, to include:

- Investigating/repairing a water leak in Narthex wall.
- Procuring/installing a replacing air conditioning unit for the church.
- Replacing the sign to designate handicapped accessibility to the church.
- Scheduling installation of the backup boiler pump which has been out for repair.
- Replacing weather stripping on the main Parish House door.
- Resolving the issue of closing (binding) exterior door on second floor of Parish House.
- Resolving water drainage issues at Cemetery cottage.
- Replacing a number of failed track lights in sanctuary ceiling.
- Repair faulty timer for exterior entry lights.
- Exterior painting, slate roof, and wet/dry rot rafter repairs.

STEWARDSHIP – Paul Edwards

As I reflect on the two Stewardship campaigns that I have had the opportunity to Chair on behalf of St Bernard’s Church, the one overwhelming sentiment that I am left with is the incredible generosity that I see from so many members of this amazing congregation. To use a sporting metaphor, it has to be said that the congregation of St Bernard’s “punches above its weight”, and by doing so provides the financial foundation upon which our church and parish can provide so much to so many.

Our theme for 2024 has been about building on our legacy of the past 125 years, and I am both hopeful and confident that we will start to build on that legacy by having indicative pledges amounting to a higher value than seen in recent history (maybe ever !!). In 2023 we received over \$167,000 in pledges (an increase of over \$8,000 from 2022), and I am hopeful that we can get closer to \$170,000 in 2024. That would represent about a \$25,000 (17%) increase over the past 5 years!! Last year was a record... let’s see what we can do this year. Your generosity is not only incredible, but also invaluable!

I also want to use my annual update to thank again the wonderful “Stewardship stories” that we heard last November from Pam Hull, Beth Gustafson, and Jenny Moss. I hope you were touched in the same way that I was by the very personal stories and hearing firsthand what St Bernard’s, and being part of this congregation meant to them.

The financial challenges and commitments we face as a church are by no means unique, and I hope that by having the opportunity to work more closely with our friends at St. John on the Mountain, and others in the local Episcopal community, we can find ways to build a stronger and more sustainable future for our churches.

One way of us doing this is through the various forms of Planned Giving, whereby we can start to think about how we include St. Bernard's church and community outreach in our financial and estate planning. This is how and where we can truly start to not just build on the legacy of the past 125 years but establish a whole new legacy for our future generations.

I will be sharing more on this over the weeks to come.

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
# of Pledges	43 to date	48	49	50	49
Amt. Pledged	161,760	167,056	157,403	157,141	145,485
Total Pledge/plate		164,331	166,595	171,820	152,441

If you still haven't pledged for 2024 or are new to our church and community and wish to learn more about our Stewardship, please reach out to me at paul.edwards0966@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.

Finally, thank you to all who have participated in this year's Stewardship program, and to all of you who have helped and partnered with me as I have had the privilege to Chair this activity.

ST. BERNARD'S CHURCH 125TH ANNIVERSARY



In 2023, St. Bernard's Episcopal Church celebrated 125 years of worship, faith formation, and service to the community in Bernardsville. The 125th Anniversary Committee consisted of Anne Fritts, Denise Thomas, and Pastor Beth. We began with an anniversary logo created by local graphic designer Victor Hunt that incorporated the decorative iron cross on top of St. Bernard's bell tower that would be used on our weekly bulletins and free merchandise that included buttons, car magnets, note pads and printed napkins for our hosted events. (These are now available for coffee hour.) With inspiration from the logo our talented Tom Brooks replicated the logo in a colorful wood emblem now proudly displayed in the church.

The committee hosted three events over the year, the first being a movie afternoon in April featuring Finding Nemo and Hidden Figures. This was a free event with an optional donation to the Community Fund. This raised \$550 and was well attended. Next, Marty Sedek, Organist and Director of Music, St. Bernard's choir, choral members from All Saints', Millington, and some of Marty's professional colleagues performed a concert in October for the community. This was a well-attended free event with an optional donation to the food bank or the Community Fund. This raised \$642 and was well appreciated by the attendees, many of whom expressed their awe of our talented musicians. A reception was held following the concert in the parish house. Our last event was a Service of thanksgiving in November featuring Ed Alstrom (former music director for Bette Midler and organist for the New York Yankees) and soloists Samantha Ferrara and Jason Robinette. This mostly musical service was to pay homage to and thank our local leaders, volunteers, and town employees. The event was very well attended and much appreciated as evidenced by enthusiastic applause and again, we hosted a reception following the service. In tandem with the last two events, Pastor Beth created a visual timeline of milestones in our church history, including some lesser-known facts. This is on view in the parish hall just to the left of the entry. We thank all who assisted with the events.

ELECTION, ORDINATION & CONSECRATION OF BISHOP SALLY FRENCH

The Right Reverend Sally French was elected the 13th Bishop of the Diocese of New Jersey on Jan. 28, 2023, and ordained and consecrated as bishop on June 24. Prior to her election, Bishop French served as Canon for Regional Ministry and Collaborative Innovation in the Diocese of North Carolina working with clergy and lay leaders to strengthen vitality and foster collaboration. Before her diocesan position, she spent 20 years in parish ministry. Bishop French was raised in Toronto, Canada, in a secular home. She was baptized, confirmed, and sponsored for ordination through campus ministries at the University of Toronto. Her husband, the Rev. Clarke French, is now an interim rector in Philadelphia and they are parents of two teenagers, Jack (12th grade) and Libby (8th grade). (*Biography from the diocesan website.*)

EPISCOPAL COMMUNITY SERVICES OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY (ECS–NJ)

We Are Stronger Together



Episcopal Community Services of the Diocese of New Jersey “focus[es] on proactively addressing human needs and relentlessly working against both social and racial injustice.”

“ECS–NJ fulfills its mission mandate by:

- Raising funds across the diocese.
- Networking and building meaningful relationships between our congregations.
- Giving grants to churches of the Diocese to help to expand existing ministries, or to encourage exciting new initiatives.
- Advocating for the reform of social structures and systems, which are unjust, and fail to respect the dignity of every human being.”

There are two grant cycles per year. “The ECS-NJ grants are designed to expand existing charity and justice ministries of congregations in the Diocese and make new ones possible. Projects should address one or more of the following objectives:

- To meet human need 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 issue relating to social justice, including spearheading new advocacy effort.”

In 2023, the first ECS-NJ Gala was held raising \$50K to fund the Stokes Endowment, a general endowment for ECS-NJ, named in honor of retiring Bishop Chip Stokes and his wife and partner in ministry, Susan Stokes. There were 171 donors to ECS-NJ in 2023. Another ECS-NJ Gala fundraiser is being planned for 2024.

St. Bernard’s is honored to be one of 24 founding congregations of Episcopal Community Services of NJ, fulfilling a commitment of \$10,000 over three years, through our Outreach budget line and parishioner donations. St. Bernard’s Episcopal Church will continue to offer ongoing support to ECS-NJ in our 2024 budget. By supporting ECS-NJ with budgeted funds, our Outreach budget line has a much greater impact helping communities throughout the lower two thirds of NJ. 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 this initiative.

ECS-NJ invites people to become friends of ECS-NJ to commit to praying regularly for this vital ministry, donating when able, and receiving updates: <https://dioceseofnj.org/ecs-friend/>. In 2023, ECS-NJ became a separate 501(c)3, allowing for matching corporate donations when available by a donor’s employer. In 2023, over \$75K was distributed in ECS-NJ grants to support efforts in 6 congregations (see below). Congregations can also receive assistance with their grant applications, which will benefit them when applying for grants from other sources. Online resources can be found on the diocesan website: <https://dioceseofnj.org/ecs>. There is also a link to donate and to the YouTube Playlist which has recordings of ECS-NJ summits and informational meetings on topics.

Spring 2023 ECS-NJ grants

#	Congregation	County	Project receiving ECS grant	Summary	Amount
1	Iglesia Episcopal San Andres, Camden	Camden	Skilled Trades Pilot Project/ Proyecto de Oficios y Habilidades	Designed to reach workers facing barriers to living wage work, including recent immigrants, under-employed workers, women, and workers lacking English proficiency. Intensive 3 month entry-level basic training, mentoring, and job placement in HVAC and plumbing in Spanish and English.	\$15,000

2	St. Michael's, Trenton	Mercer	The 12 Steps & More Bookstore for Mental & Spiritual Health	2 nd phase for the 12 Steps & More Bookstore for Mental & Spiritual Health – developing a pool of volunteers to be self-sustaining. 1 st phase, partnering with 17 community and govt. orgs. supported by a fall 2021 ECS grant.	\$14,897
Total					\$29,897

Fall 2023 ECS-NJ grant recipients

#	Congregation	County	Project receiving ECS grant	Summary	Amount
1	St. Stephen's, Whiting	Ocean	St. Stephen's Community Garden	Refurbishing the garden to grow vegetables for Our Daily Bread Food Pantry, hosted at St. Stephen's.	\$12,000
2	Christ Church, Riverton	Burlington	Christ Church Fishes and Loaves Ministry	Address loneliness of seniors and food insecurity by hosting monthly senior luncheons. Funds will help add an additional community meal for all. In response to community-identified need.	\$8,300
3	St. Peter's, Freehold	Monmouth	The Lockers and Laundry Program	Partnering with Emergency Housing and Advocacy Program, Inc. to install lockers at EHAP and the church for people who are unhoused to store their belongings and provide laundry tokens.	\$14,904
4	St. Augustine's, Asbury Park	Monmouth	St. Augustine Asbury Park Feeding Program and After School Program	Building on 30 years of providing a Sunday meal for the community, adding a Wed. after school program.	\$10,000
Total					\$45,204

CHRISTIAN FORMATION – *The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino*

In the winter and spring of 2023, a group of 8-10 parishioners read the second half of the book *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* by Marcus Borg and reflected on it during six Zoom sessions on Thursday nights, facilitated by Pastor Beth using a leader's guide for the book. The first half of the book was explored in the fall of 2022.

Zoom Evening Prayer continued on Wednesdays at 5:30 pm, meeting weekly during Lent and Advent, and every other week during the rest of the program year, with a break over the summer. Each week we learn about a saint of the church and the Scripture reading reflected the saint's life. We have the liturgy available on slides to facilitate ease of participation, or the bulletin and an insert for the saint can be found on our website. Since the fall of 2022, we've invited parishioners from St. Paul's, Morris Plains, and St. John on the Mountain to participate. The Rev. Danielle Baker, Priest-in-charge of St. Paul's and former St. Bernard's seminarian helps lead the service with Pastor Beth. All are welcome to join us, including listening in while commuting or walking the dog.

In the winter and spring, we continued to hold in-person JOY! services for families with young children on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 9 am in the church or Parish Hall. This 20-minute informal worship experience engage children and their parents in song, Bible story, prayer, and faith conversation. With the affiliation, the 9 am time Sunday time slot is taken but we are looking forward to collaborative offering for children, youth, and families with St. John's. Some children from St. Bernard's participated in the Christmas Pageant at St. John on the Mountain this past year.

Elementary and middle school parishioners participate occasionally during worship as acolytes. Pastor Beth engaged children in an interactive sermon during the 4 pm Christmas Eve service.

In 2023, we shared Ash Wednesday with St. Mark's, Basking Ridge, and St. John on the Mountain. Services were held at 9 am (St. Mark's), 12 pm (St. John's), and 7:30 pm (St. Bernard's with combined choir). During Holy Week, we also partnered with St. Mark's and St. John's for Maundy Thursday Holy Eucharist (St. Mark's), Good Friday Zoom Stations of the Cross, Good Friday Liturgy (St. John's with combined choir), and Easter Vigil (St. Bernard's). We celebrated Easter Day with two services at 9 am and 11 am at St. Bernard's. The 2024 schedule will be similar with the addition of a 12 pm Good Friday Liturgy at St. John's chapel for those looking for a midday service.

Advent Wreath Making was held in the Parish Hall. St. Bernard's was hosted by St. John on the Mountain for a joint service on Dec. 10 followed by a German Christmas Advent Coffee hour, attended by 120 people. St. Bernard's hosted the joint Blue Christmas Service on Thursday, Dec. 14, with St. Mark's and St. John on the Mountain. The choir lead the music beautifully for this meditative service. The Blue Christmas service is designed to be beneficial and uplifting for those of us who are experiencing sorrow, loss, or grief during the festive season. We continue to welcome all to attend. The Christmas Eve services were well attended this year with 325 people between the two parishes. St. Bernard's choir sang at the 4 pm and 8 pm services, St. John's service was at 6 pm. 15 people attended the Christmas Day service.

CROSS ROADS CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER, PORT MURRAY, NJ

The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino

In 2023, Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center successfully hosted guest retreats and held youth retreats, the annual women's retreat, plus 4 weeks of summer Youth Camp and a week (and weekend!) of Family Camp. Pastor Beth and her son attended Family Camp. Youth and Family Camp continued to be subsidized for all campers, now with a tiered pricing system so that those who can afford to do so can help cover the cost of others. Cross Roads continued to experience reduced income from retreats and other contracts in 2023. Pastor Beth served her last year as the chair of Cross Roads Development Council in 2023, having been in the role for five years. She remains on the Development Council.

In October, parishioners helped Pastor Beth raise \$1,618.60 in the Rally for Cross Roads 5K Walk/Run. 2023 was the most successful year of this fundraiser, raising over \$30K. Cross Roads continues to be a meaningful place to connect with nature, God, and build community. As well as to get away for rest, renewal, disconnection from electronics. It's a wonderful environment for immersion in our Christian faith, lived out over meals, singing, and outdoor fun. Contributions to Cross Roads Annual Fund for annual recurring needs are welcome at any time, www.crossroadsretreat.com. Thank you for supporting Cross Roads, our Episcopal and Lutheran camp and retreat center in NJ.

Outreach Reports

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

St. Bernard's always excels itself in outreach and service to the community and this year was no exception. Below is a list of outreach activities that we participated 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 Pastor Beth, 908-766-0602.**

Month	Outreach Activity
January	In the past we've done a Sock collection for the guests at Grace's Kitchen, Plainfield.
School Year	Our successful Homework Helpers Program meets on Tuesdays & Wednesday from 3-5 pm, volunteers are needed. See Homework Helpers report for details.
April & Nov.	Our traditional Turkey, Chicken and Ham Collections were held for Easter and Thanksgiving.
May	On May 7 we celebrated ECS-NJ Sunday during our Sunday service.
All Year Round	Non-perishable food back be donated for Feeding America Backpack Program and Food Bank Network of Somerset County Drive in the recycling bin outside the church or in the Narthex. The food is then delivered to the Food Bank.
May through November	God's Giving Garden produced 4,377 lbs. of harvest to be delivered to various food banks and institutions. They also held a very successful Honey Sale . This money goes back into the Garden for next year's supplies. The Garden Blessing was held on May 21.
September	Zufall Health Dental Van visited Bernardsville and to clean students' teeth and take X-rays. Funded through a federal grant, St. Bernard's Community Fund helped cover some cost and hosted the van.

2023	Parishioners were invited to support victims of natural disasters and wars in various parts of the world through Episcopal Relief & Development .
October	Pastor Beth participated in the annual Rally For Cross Roads Retreat & Camp Center , raising \$1,618 for Camp with your generous support.
November	Thanksgiving Food Drive – a few creative parishioners beautifully decorated our altar with food (fresh fruits & vegetables, pumpkins, a cornucopia etc.). The food was donated to the Food Bank.
December	St. Bernard’s Cemetery again participated in Wreaths Across America for the 3rd year.

GOD’S GIVING GARDEN – *Cathy Ferrara*

After our record-breaking harvest in 2022, we at the garden had no idea what to expect in 2023. With a lot of hard work and faithful volunteers, our garden total was 4,377 lbs.! All of this fresh produce was shared between the clients at the Food Bank Network of Somerset County, The Veterans at the Lyons VA, and the Bernardsville Food Pantry. This year we also donated at a pop-up distribution center in the municipal parking lot on Mt. Airy Road called Feeding Hands of Bernardsville.

Our improvements this year focused on expanding 2 of our beds by nearly 50%, reinforcing the wooden frames on a number of the beds, and turning our former bee hive area into another bed for production (bed #16!). This year our expanded Apiary had up to 9 active bee hives during the height of the season. Our bees produced over 30 dozen jars of delicious honey. The money raised from the honey sales, as well as sales of herbed vinegars made by volunteers, will help in further expanding and improving the gardens for the future.

God’s Giving Garden provides fresh, organic produce to the needy in our community who otherwise may not have access to this type of healthy food. The garden requires constant attention, but as the saying goes, ‘many hands make light work’. We are always looking for new volunteers. There are many ways in which to help. If weeding and harvesting isn’t your thing, maybe you could deliver our harvest once a month to the VA or the Food Bank? There are always helpers to load and unload. Maybe you would like to sit and help brush and sort garlic? We have experienced volunteers willing to teach and guide even the most novice gardener. Please join us next year as we continue this important mission. Volunteer hours during the season: Tuesday-Thursday, and Saturdays, 9 am-12 pm.

THE COMMUNITY FUND – *Mindy Kirby & Pastor Beth*

In 2023, the Community Fund lost the wonderful Sue Smith, who had served as the administrator of the Fund for many years. Sue was dedicated to helping the people who applied for grants, to the point of delivering checks to landlords and other creditors herself, and sometimes meeting the grantees. She was also good at weeding out scammers. Sue was committed to the Community Fund, and we miss her good judgement and good humor every time a grant is submitted. Over \$7,000 was donated to the Fund in her memory, so we can continue her work in the future.

The mission of the Community Fund is simply 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 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 of the grant applications are confidential. The Fund expects its grants to be a component of a larger partnership of assistance; for example, in 2023 this included a referral from Heartworks, another local organization founded after September 11, 2001. Our help dovetails with their help to assist in all the ways people need support. We were able to pay utility and other bills for a single mother with cancer, while Heartworks provided emotional and practical support for her and her family. We also provided assistance with rent to other families in the Somerset Hills in 2023.

In addition to referrals from community partners, we welcome referrals from parishioners who know of situations where the Community Fund could help. Our Community Fund committee has been expanded; if you have referrals or questions, please contact: Anne Fritts, Pam Hull, Mindy Kirby, Valerie McEntee, or Pastor Beth.

You can also help this outreach program to our neighbors in need by sending contributions to the Community Fund of St. Bernard's Church to the parish office at 88 Claremont Road, Bernardsville, NJ 07924. Thanks to everyone who supports the Fund.

HOMEWORK HELP AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT – *Cindy McWilliams*

Homework Helpers, our tutoring program run with the Somerset Hills YMCA, reopened March 2022. We have enjoyed in person learning with students grades 3-8, providing homework help, practice in basic skills, and a healthy snack. Our tutors, ages 14 -74+ years old, welcome the young students Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 3:00-5:00 pm in our parish hall. We are working hard to help our tutees make up for time lost in the classroom due to the pandemic. 2023 has been our most challenging year finding enough adult and teen tutors to ideally provide one on one help. We have capped the number of students we help to 13 (about half our regular number) until we can find more tutors. We are blessed to have such a lovely place for Homework Helpers to meet. We are blessed with smiles and thanks from our tutees and their incredibly grateful families.

Guilds' Reports

ALTAR GUILD

The Altar Guild at 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, 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 in-person 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, all of which was then donated to the Food Bank of Somerset County. This year much of the produce for this altar was donated by Melick's Town Farm in Oldwick. If a parishioner wishes to donate flowers in honor of their family or friends or in memory of a deceased loved one, please contact our Parish Administrator or sign up on the Flower dedication 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 908-766-0602 for additional information.

CHALICIST GUILD – *Mary Kempen*

In 2023, 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. The chalicists who served during 2023 are Mary Jane Canose, Mary Kempen, and Denise Thomas. We would welcome any interest parties – men or women – who would like to be a part of the Eucharistic celebration.

Financials

TREASURER'S REPORT – *Michael Myers*

Summary of 2023 results vs. 2023 budget

Church: Our operating budget was roughly 1/3 for clergy, 1/3 for administration and upkeep, and 1/3 for everything else (see table on next page). The affiliation with St. John's began sharing rector costs starting at the end of 3rd quarter providing about \$12K in savings vs. budget for 2023. The weather was mild and we saved some money on utilities and we also saved on some administrative costs, but our routine giving from parishioners came in about \$5K less than budget, and we had more heating repairs than anticipated. Nevertheless, we finished about \$10K better than expected.

As in past years, we pulled nearly 25% of our operating funds from investments. The market ended the year strong so it funded our withdrawals and we still gained 2.8% (\$27K) versus end of 2022. Total non-cemetery investments ended the year at \$981K.

Cemetery: The boom in lot sales we saw during Covid has subsided, and our revenue is back closer to pre-pandemic levels. We used some of the excess revenue from 2022 to fund much needed tree work and lead paint remediation at the cottage.

Looking Forward for 2024

Church:

- The affiliation will save an additional \$27K in clergy costs versus 2023 (for a total of \$39K savings in clergy costs vs. 2023 budget).
- We have budgeted for increases in routine giving and the administrative fee charged to the cemetery
- We anticipate administration costs more typical of prior years, but higher HVAC maintenance, utilities and insurance costs.
- These items, combined with some cash on hand at year end, should allow us to halve the amount needed to pull from investments vs 2023.

Cemetery: We anticipate continuing to use some of 2022's extra income on overdue maintenance items.

- We project revenues in line with the average of the last four years.
- We will increase the administration fee paid to the church for managing the cemetery.
- We again will plan for higher than normal tree work and cottage maintenance.

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

The Parish Register of St. Bernard's Episcopal Church indicates 85 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.

✦ 2023 Official Acts

Baptisms	3
Confirmed	0
Received	0
Marriages	3
Funerals/Committal Services	7

✦ 2023 Worship Services

Total Number of Services	98
Eucharistic Services	60 (including 6 Communion from the Reserved Sacrament)
Daily Office:	
Sunday Morning Prayer	2
Evening Prayer	23
Private/Home Communion	1
Other	12

Included in the Other category this year are the Blue Christmas service, JOY! services, Service of thanksgiving, and Pastoral services (Funerals or Committals, Holy Matrimony) that were not a Eucharistic service or Daily Office.



Clergy and Staff

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

Wardens and Vestry

Christopher Thomas, Paul Edwards, *Wardens*
Michael Myers, *Treasurer*; Linda Engleby, *Clerk*
Linda Engleby, Anne Fritts, Beth Gustafson,
Taylor Hwong, Mary Kempen, Meg McKee,
Jennifer Moss, Michael Myers

ST. BERNARD'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

88 Claremont Road, Bernardsville, New Jersey 07924

908-766-0602

www.StBernardsNJ.org