

REFLECTION AND VISION

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Rector's Report over 2023- St. Martin's Episcopal Church For Annual Meeting January 28, 2024

Ministries

I continue to be amazed at the energy this parish puts into its Garden ministry and Laundry Love. As you can see from the reports from John Lange and Anne and Jim Fischer, these initiatives continue to make an amazing impact in caring for our neighbors and restoring dignity and well-being to the lives of people struggling economically in our region.

Another blessing was the addition of Deacon Loretta Go. Deacons are theoretically to serve no more than 10 hours a week, as they do not receive monetary compensation. We have further been sharing Loretta with first another parish and now with the bishop as she accompanies him on his visitations. Loretta is also the chair of the Diocesan Recovery Ministries, and it is through her connections that we were able to put our LifeBox, containing NarCan to counteract opioid overdose, next to our Blessing Box.

The Outreach Committee continues to look for new ways to reach out to our community, with programs and campaigns in the parish to support Circle of Concern's Food Pantry, Episcopal City Mission's needs for birthdays and holidays, Toys for Tots, and other worthy causes. Thanks to Dana Griggs and all those who support the outreach committee, including the LEF grants that help fund many of these outreach efforts.

Both the Blessing Box and the Life Box have been regularly used by members of our community. With these two simple ministries of presence, we are saving lives in our community. Everything for the Life Box has been donated to this parish, from the doses of Narcan which we receive from both UMSL and from parishioner Sandra Mayen, Director of the T StL, a holistic health and harm reduction clinic in St. Louis whose mission is to address the dangers of addiction and other challenges of modern urban environments. Both the Blessing Box and the LifeBox are registered nationally, so that people can find these resources with a simple internet search. At the time we installed our LifeBox in September, it was the only one in this part of St. Louis County. I also want to thank Al and Laura Kelly for their work on the outdoor columbarium, and Al's assistance in moving and building of a wheelchair ramp for a Laundry Love client.

Pastoral Care

The best news this year in this area was the restarting of our teams of Eucharistic ministers in June after a three year delay in being able to resume this after the pandemic. These dedicated ministers live out their baptismal ministry by helping bring communion each week to dozens of our parishioners who cannot attend worship in person. This has been such a blessing for our homebound members—and is available to everyone, even those who simply find it difficult getting to worship. I am also willing to distribute consecrated wafers to those families who would like to be able to take communion with those of us in person when watching online. Please contact me if you would like to have this available to you.

Deacon Loretta and I also regularly visit people in their homes, in assisted living, in hospital, in rehabilitation centers, and in hospice, providing a listening ear, advocacy for those who are alone and struggling to navigate their preferences with their care teams, and other health and wellness needs as well as the comfort of the sacraments of the Church.

As both rector of this parish and as a priest, I presided over eight funerals this year, either for St. Martin's parishioners or their family, beloved friends of mine, or as a resource for Schrader's Funeral Home when

they have Episcopalians who do not have a current parish home but wish to have a service of Burial according to the prayer book. This is another way that this parish helps minister to the community.

I am also grateful to the Men's Fellowship for diving back in to supporting the parish's burial needs by helping contribute to the making and the engraving of the urns used in our columbarium.

Worship

We are a praying community. Worship and liturgy in the Episcopal Church demands the active participation of the laity. Most roles in the liturgy are meant to be accomplished by laypersons. The only roles specifically set aside for ordained persons are the proclamation of the gospel (by a deacon if available, preferably) and the consecration of the elements during the Holy Communion. Everything else, even preaching, can be done by lay people as ministers of the Church by right of baptism. Lay participation as lay readers, chalice bearers and eucharistic ministers, leaders of the prayers (they're called "prayers of the people" for a reason), ushers, greeters, acolytes, bulletin makers, and so on, is highlighted by our prayer book rubrics, and is part of our Anglican heritage as a Christian denomination that is both Catholic and reformed.

The altar guild has been an amazing force in making sure all the needs for our worship life are anticipated and prepared for in a reverent, beautiful manner. These parishioners prepare for numerous regular and special worship service (such as Blue Christmas, Holy Week, funerals, etc.) with amazing dedication. The load they carry is not inconsiderable. Thank you to all the altar guild members, especially Barb Hankemeyer, our leader, who dedicates so much thought and energy into preparing for all of our various worship needs.

We have two delightful young volunteer acolytes, Florence Raiche and Abby Mayen, who are eager to serve every time they come to church! It has been wonderful having acolytes serving at the altar at the 10:30 service! We were also thrilled to be able to have the River Blenders who use our space on Monday nights once again worship at the 10:30 service, sharing with us their musical gifts, for the first time since COVID.

After trying to restart the weekly 8:30 service and not achieving sustainability as a weekly service, we tried to find a middle ground, and St. Martin's has, this year, been offering the Rite I spoken Eucharist as a monthly worship option. It is held on the third Sunday of the month, with the exception of December, when due to my return from vacation and the work of the choir in offering the Lessons and Carols service for Advent, we asked attendees of the 8:30 to join in a single service to honor the choir's work. Attendance seems to justify having this service monthly. Of course, we would love to consider the return to a weekly worship offering if attendance numbers (pre-COVID it averaged 29 worshipers a week) and liturgical participants can be increased to justify the extra time needed by altar guild, clergy (bulletin preparation, and extra time on what is already a full day on Sundays). Given the demands already on parish ordained and volunteer staff, there needs to be a demonstrated demand for this service to move back to weekly observance. We shall see what the year can bring.

The 505 continues to be a low-risk, "Rite III" worship service that is particularly inviting to those who have not been to worship for a while. It's come as you are, low-key but soothing characteristics have been a balm to my own family since we started attending this service in 2015.

Our main Sunday Eucharist has been a joyful, steady celebration for both our in-person worshipers and those online, thanks once again to the devotion of my spouse and ministry partner Bill Scoopmire, who spends hours each week programming the software and monitoring the various broadcast components with this assistance of Becky McCoy Brewer, of Jim Fischer on camera, Chris Marsh on sound, and Scott

Scoopmire who remotely troubleshoots. We are always looking for more people to learn how to participate in this vital worship and outreach resource that enables another 40-80 household a week, all over the country, to worship with us and share the Word of God. Special thanks go to Becky McCoy Brewer for taking over for Bill while we were on vacation in November and December.

The music by Denise, the hand bell and regular choirs, and the children Denise generously teaches music to during worship while they attend Children's Chapel, as well as various guest and solo musicians throughout the year, is accomplished by Denise and our musicians with great creativity and economy. We have a musical program of which we all should be very proud, and we are especially grateful for the new members who have joined or participated in the last many months.

I am also grateful to both John Lange and Tom Allen for being willing to lead compline during this last year. Tom's leadership of compline continues—join us online on Facebook Live at 8:30 pm on Sunday evenings for this beautiful, brief service of prayer each week. As John has stepped back from leading compline on Wednesdays, it would be great to find a volunteer willing to offer a midweek service as well.

We are a praying community. I also thank everyone who engages in one of our prayer chains and supports the people whose needs are shared therein. Prayer changes things!

Fellowship and Formation

One new program we have begun this year with great success is our First Thursdays Fellowship program. Once a month, on the first Thursday of the month, we have met at local eating establishments for a chance to eat a meal and talk with one another. The last several have been held at the Wolf Café just a mile to the east of the parish, and with almost every week the number of people attending has increased. All ages are invited and friends and neighbors are most certainly welcome. I am hoping to be able to offer at least one of these on a different night, perhaps in summer when there is more flexibility, for those who have commitments of Thursdays. There is so much going on at St. Martin's every day of the week, there is no perfect day for any offering—and that's a good thing!

These fellowship opportunities are in addition to our Men's Fellowship, hosting another amazing Barbecue Competition and Car Show this past spring under the encouragement and industry of Mike Kelly—plans are already underway for this year's extravaganza!

Thanks also go to Julia Krelo for the amazing brunches we enjoy each month.

Other Fellowship opportunities include the Lunch Bunch, our weekly Sunday coffee hour, and Quilt group, just to name a few. Might the ladies or young adults or young families of the parish like to organize some sort of regular gatherings? That would be wonderful!

In terms of formation, the most vigorous Children's Chapel in West County continues to draw in young families and teach the children of this parish and their friends about the love of God through an engaging program once again superbly led by Sherry Algren and her volunteer teaching corps. The kids have stories, activities, snacks, and even a music lesson each week thanks Denise doing double duty and heading downstairs during the sermon, teaching the kids to play percussive instruments, introduce them to reading music and teaching them songs that they then often share in worship during the offertory. The Soft Space and Soothing Space continue to offer families options for during worship or before and after. Our

Everybody's Story Children's Library continues to get new titles, and children, parents, and grandparents continue to avail themselves of these resources.

I am grateful for the continued strength of the Monday Morning Bible Study led by John Lange in the library. I would like to see more opportunities for adult formation be taken up and led by parishioners, but once again, there are so many ways to serve, everyone should be able to find something that speaks to their own gifts and talents.

This parish has added new scouting and 12-step groups to host this year, and it is our joy to use our building as a resource for our community.

Financial And Administrative

There is a detailed financial report from our treasurer, so I do not want to detract from that nor unnecessarily repeat it. I do want to highlight that this parish owes a huge thank you to Treasurer Paige Andersen; Assistant Treasurer Becky McCoy Brewer; Senior Warden Greg Andersen and our amazing vestry members; and the members of the Investment Committee, Capital Campaign committee, and those who are on the property utilization committee seeking to find ways to generate revenue from our buildings and meeting rooms. We also need to never forget that our parish administrator, Janet Theiss, serves as our de facto book keeper so that we do not have to pay for one, helped by a crew of counters and others willing to help out with mailings at quarterly giving statement time. All of these people put their every effort into the being leaders working for the financial wellbeing of this parish.

It's a challenging time for ALL communities of faith right now. The effects of COVID financially continue to reverberate, as well as changes in church membership and attendance patterns ongoing from the times in which we live. Yet there are so many signs of hope and vitality at St. Martin's. If we would remove that sea anchor of deficits that slows down this parish, the mind boggles at what we could accomplish as ministers and disciples of Jesus.

The capital campaign continues to demonstrate its financial power under the leadership and often muscle of Steve Brunkhorst. This parish has just completed the much-longed for replacement of the carpet in the narthex, chapel, stairwell, and copy room thanks to Steve (and Maggie's) efforts, and we all should be so proud of what we have done in making our facilities more welcoming as well as stewarding our financial resources in a healthy manner. We still await as need to expand the columbarium, which has no vacancies.

I also want to thank all of you who give to the clergy discretionary funds, either through the Christmas Boutique so wonderfully organized each year by Judi Batch and Mary Pomeroy, among others, or through giving on the third Sunday of each month in the collection plate. This money goes to provide shelter or prevent the loss of home, electricity, sewage services or water, to put groceries in the pantries of the hungry, and gas in the tanks and clothing on the backs of working people who depend upon our help. It also is used to support sheltering ministries in other parishes and faith communities around the region and around the world.

We met a year ago facing a deficit of just over \$100,000. Many of you stepped up to try to reduce that deficit. We always remember that forecasting a budget and a surplus or a deficit, especially in church finances, is ultimately, a forecast. A deficit is not finalized until the last donation is taken in and the last check is sent out, and at any time the financial situation can change for the better through the determination and the will of those who love this parish and want to support the thousands of ways St. Martin's makes a

real difference in the lives of not just our members, but those in the communities around us. The members of St. Martin's heard that forecast and rose mightily to the challenge. We ended the year reducing that forecast shortfall by more than half.

One of the greatest individual shoulders to the wheel of deficit reduction belongs to Lincoln Drake, who outdid even his already impressive level of dedication to this parish by offering a year end matching challenge for the 2023 budget and a 2024 pledge challenge to give our stewardship campaign for the coming year an impressive, life-altering boost. Words fail me in expressing my gratitude for Lincoln and Mary Jane's drive and determination to set the finances of this parish to rights. May we all be inspired to do likewise in assuring the health and vitality of this parish and its ministries for the next 60 years. Once again, there is no logical, demographic, or financial reason for the continued deficits of this parish. We still have many pledges outstanding despite starting our annual giving campaign early. If these were returned at levels near the average for the diocese, we would have no deficit.

Our staff is overworked and underpaid, and some of our staff, especially Lincoln Drake and Scott Scoopmire, refuses pay. We need to hire a part-time sexton in particular—but the deficit must be slain first. I continue to be grateful to Page Andersen and Derek and Kelly Barkey for assisting in preparing the Sunday 10:30 bulletins, which takes a great deal of pressure off of me so that I can put together the 505, the 8:30, and all funeral bulletins. It's shocking how many bulletins have to be assembled in the course of a year in this parish.

We will also receive financial help from the diocesan budget this year to pay part of my salary. In exchange, we will be required to participate in the next cohort of the Requiem or Renaissance program which seeks to help parishes define their mission and ministries and empower themselves for growth. I hope to have volunteers from vestry and the parish to commit themselves to this vital work of reflection and focus. For more information, please contact Deacon Loretta.

I am very grateful for the conclusion of service of Tom Allen, Becky McCoy Brewer, and Angela Logan on the vestry at this meeting. I am also grateful for the willingness of our new vestry candidates, Scott Shearer, Nancy Schiebal, and Chelsea Brewer, to serve for the next three years, and I hope you join me in supporting your lay leadership and seeking to find new ways to strengthen St. Martin's each and every one of us, for the future.

Everyone has a role to play in the growth of St. Martin's as a flourishing community. And it starts by actually inviting people you know to worship or to parish events. If every member personally invited one person or family every month, think of what could happen! If you see a need being unmet, the first question is how can you contribute to filling it? And as you can see from this report, so many of you operate under this principle every single day in our common life, and I am sure I have omitted many people for which I apologize. The Spirit is alive and active here at St. Martin's thanks to all of you who actively contribute, work, give, and pray at and with this beloved community. May God bless us all in this coming year, filled with possibility and faithfulness, through the help of God.

In Christ,
The Rev. Leslie Barnes Scoopmire
Rector

**ANNUAL REPORT OF DEACON
St. Martin's Episcopal Church - January 28, 2024**

2023 was a very busy and exciting year! After completing an 18-month field placement at Holy Communion in U. City, I was ordained to the Diaconate in June, and in July began my first diaconal placement assignment from Bishop Johnson: Half time at St. Martin's and half time at All Saints and Ascension in Northwoods for a one-year period.

On my first Sunday as your deacon, we said goodbye to Rev. Shug and Doris. I have always said that God has a sense of humor... In 2021, a week after Rev. Shug was ordained and began her tenure at St. Martin's, I left to begin my exegetical placement. I was excited to return to St. Martin's in 2023 after being away for two years. I have enjoyed reconnecting with long time congregants as well as meeting and getting to know new folks who came on board while I was away.

I attended vestry meetings as I was able to and began working to put together a team to participate in "Requiem or Renaissance," an 18-month discernment and skills-building program for congregations currently receiving diocesan financial aid. I assisted Mother Leslie in making pastoral calls. I experienced Laundry Love for the first time. As Chair of Episcopal Recovery Ministries, I coordinated with Mother Leslie and our vestry team to bring a Narcan Box to St. Martin's, providing life-saving Naloxone, free of charge, 24/7, no questions asked. This endeavor led to collaboration with three more churches in our diocese to install similar boxes.

As part of my advocacy for equality in social, racial, religious and LGBTQ+ relations, I served on a rotating basis as facilitator in the Sacred Ground series and served on the Board of the Interfaith Partnership of Greater St. Louis. I worked with PRIDE St. Louis participating in their interfaith service downtown and marching in the parade. Right before Christmas, I represented St. Martin's at Episcopal City Mission's annual gift-wrapping party, something I have done for several years.

In December, my assignment to All Saints and Ascension unexpectedly ended and Bishop Johnson subsequently appointed me as Bishop's Chaplain. As such, I accompany him on his Sunday visits throughout the diocese.

I am honored to serve as your deacon, and I ask for your continued prayers and support as we enter 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Loretta E. Go

2024 Annual Meeting: Senior Warden Report

Submitted by Greg Andersen, Senior Warden

I've enjoyed my first year back on the St. Martins Vestry after serving on the Investment Committee for several years. It has been an honor to serve as the Senior Warden for 2023. I've become a little more involved in various aspects of our church and I am amazed at the efforts of so many people to ensure St. Martins operates smoothly each day. I am similarly amazed and humbled at the efforts of so many parishioners to help various people in need within our community. This report is filled with pages summarizing our members various efforts both inside and outside our church.

Our Vestry has worked hard in 2023 to support all of our various Ministries while balancing our income and expenses and will continue to do so in 2024. Thanks to the generosity of our members throughout the year, we exceeded our budgeted income by nearly \$51,000. Our expenses finished under budget by over \$17,000, resulting in narrowing our budgeted gap from approximately \$100,000 to \$32,000. We expect to continue this trend in 2024 by managing our costs and encouraging members to contribute as they are able. Additionally, we will continue to pursue our efforts to investigate options to generate additional income from further utilization of our facilities.

I would like to thank the Vestry Members, Mother Leslie, Page Andersen and Loretta Go for their time this year to share ideas, debate options and make the best decisions possible to support St. Martins values. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any Vestry member to ask questions, share concerns and offer ideas.

I look forward to a blessed 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Andersen, Senior Warden

2024 Annual Meeting: Junior Warden Report

Submitted by Becky Brewer, Junior Warden

Thank you for the privilege of serving as a vestry member these last 3 years and your Junior Warden this last year.

This year has been a year of changes for St. Martin's and a lot has happened in what seems like a rather short 12 months.

This year we had to say goodbye to The Very Reverend Shug Goodlow and her lovely family, we also welcomed our friend, The Reverend Loretta Go as our Deacon and celebrated her ordination.

We've made some changes to our building including some lovely new carpet, rearranged the space to more easily accommodate our musicians, and many fixes to existing infrastructure lead by our fearless Lincoln Drake.

We've said goodbye to some dear friends and parishioners while welcoming many new members and families to our church. With all of these changes, it would be easy to sit back and adjust to them while trying to hold onto the status quo, however our church has grown all the while.

This year we served many families through our Laundry Love program and helped people find food, gas, and help with other emergencies through our donations to the priest discretionary funds. I've seen members of our church go above and beyond to help our neighbors both inside this building and outside of it.

We had a wonderful car show and barbeque that seems to grow every year, and a trunk or treat and chili cook off that saw more visitors than I can personally remember.

We helped people in our community with our Blessing Box and our new Narcan box. Both of which have seen heavy use, showing how much need there is in our community.

On top of all the good that we've done as a church this year, we also managed to lower our deficit by almost 70% leaving us in a better financial position than we were anticipating at the beginning of the year.

It is my most fervent hope that in the coming year we as St. Martin's continue to grow and love our neighbors whether it be the ones we see inside the church every week, or those that live outside of these doors.