

The Church of St. John on the Mountain

Sunday, March 1, 2026



By Tani Koch

**Annual Meeting and Report
for the Year Ending 2025**

THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN ON THE MOUNTAIN

ANNUAL MEETING

March 1, 2026, 10:00 AM

ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Potluck Bruch

Opening Prayer

Minutes of last year's Annual meeting for approval

Priest's Report by the Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino - Music program update

Affiliation and Steering Committee update

Wardens' Report by Michelle Ray & Bob Courtemanche

Recognition of Outgoing Warden by Bob Courtemanche & Pastor Beth

Election of Warden, Diocesan Convention deputies, and Watchung Convocation delegates

Budget and Finances Report by Kathy Christie

Table Conversations

Planned Giving Q & A by Peter Mercer & Pastor Beth

Concluding Prayer

Adjournment

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St. John on the Mountain Annual Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2026,

Attending:

Priest-in-Charge: The Reverend Beth Rauen Sciaino

Members:

Sue and Ron Kennedy, Michelle Ray, Peter, Kathy and Grace Tober, Kit and Kathy Falcon, Sam Murphy, Stephanie Haueis, Lynda Stadtmueller, Tina Johnson, Nina Dixon, Kathy Christie, Dan and Kat Zielinski, Pete Vollmar, Gail Wragg, Joy Baird, Jody Flegal, Marie and Bill Young, Jane and Peter Mercer

Additional attendees: Sarah Aquino, Parish Administrator, and Alejo Jimenez (flamenco guitarist).

Priest Report: Beth Rauen Sciaino

Opened the supper meeting at 5:55pm with a prayer and invited all to enjoy the tasty ‘pot-luck’ assortment and refreshments. After eating, Pastor Beth welcomed and thanked all for attending on this cold and snowy evening. She also thanked Warden Sue Kennedy and retiring Vestry members Jody Flegal, Lori Morris, Stephanie Haueis and Bill Young, the Church staff by name and all volunteers who have contributed time and talent.

She then highlighted the completed repair and renovation of the Parish Hall and Nursery School area severely damaged by frozen pipes on the weekend of January 26. Repairs have been impressive and completely reimbursed by our insurance policy!

She noted that during Lent, we will rearrange seating at the 9:00am services by inviting people forward to the first seven rows of the Nave with our choir seated behind them. This will enhance community and participation of all members.

Wardens’ Report:

Sue Kennedy commented on her four years’ service and thanked all for support through this very challenging period including a period without a priest and planning and implementation of our affiliation with St. Bernard’s Church. “We are better now than four years ago!” Warden Michelle Ray commented on the significant effort and results achieved during Ms. Kennedy’s tenure. Ms. Kennedy then received a standing ovation of applause for her outstanding service.

The election of our new Warden, Vestry members, Deputies to the Diocesan Convention and Delegates to the Watchung Convocation was accomplished after motion by Mr. Tober, with seconding by Ms. Johnson, for election by acclamation of the eligible attendees. The motion passed unanimously:

Warden:

Bob Courtemanche

Vestry Members:

Beth Murphy, Lynda Stadtmueller, Sam Murphy and Kit Falcon

Deputies to Diocesan Convention:

Mary Courtemanche, Nina Dixon, Tina Mason Johnson

Delegates to the Watchung Convocation:

Nina Dixon, Margaret Griggs, Sue Kennedy.

Financials:

The Church financial results and plans were then narrated by Treasurer, Kathy Christie. Our **2024** revenues and expenses were close to the financial plan with a lower than planned deficit. The Vestry-approved budget for **2025** includes small increases in revenues (58 pledges; \$280,000) and expenses resulting in a very small deficit for the year. These results are impacted by a higher 'draw' from our investment account which was previously approved by the Vestry. Additionally, the plan has increased program expenses, pay increases for staff, and a \$2000 contribution to the ECS-NJ. Our Outreach and Diocesan contributions will continue the same as 2024. There is no fundraiser in the 2025 plan.

Capital projects completed in 2024 were highlighted. Other priorities intended for completion in 2025 include improved lighting in the Nave, repair to the Chapel foundation and, of course, completion of the repair of slate roofs. (See pages 16 and 17 of the Annual Report for many details).

As the meeting closed, it was noted that the Annual Report was very thorough and well prepared with much valuable information and reporting.

The meeting was adjourned with a prayer of thanksgiving.

The congregation was then treated to a musical and cultural segment narrated by Sarah Aquino and elegantly performed by her husband Alejo Jimenez (flamenco guitarist).

Submitted by: Peter Mercer- Clerk of the Vestry

PRIEST'S REPORT

Priest-in-Charge Report

The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino

Throughout the year, at baptisms and on major feast days of our church year we have the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to God and each other through the Baptismal Covenant. These are the ways that we live our Christian faith as the parish of St. John on the Mountain.

Each Sunday when we gather for worship we live into the first question – continuing to learn and grow in our faith through Scripture, music, prayer, Holy Communion, praise, gratitude, and connection. Fellowship, participating in our shared communal life together, has always been central to being friends and followers of Jesus.

I'm grateful for the many ways that you, as lay leaders and parishioners of St. John on the Mountain have embraced our affiliation with St. Bernard's Episcopal Church. Recognizing that fellowship, worship, outreach, and more are enriched and energized when they are expanded. Over the past almost 2.5 years of affiliation, our parishes have done much together, inviting each other into traditions and creating new ones together. Creatively identifying ways to serve the broader community of those in need through Angels' Closet and other partnerships including St. John's Nursery School. When we come together we are able to help more people.

Our identity as people of faith is rooted in our God of compassion, mercy, and steadfast love. The joy and peace we find in God is expressed through our care for our neighbors and strangers we may never meet as we strive for peace and justice.

Thank you for being leaders in outreach in the Somerset Hills and for partnering with so many wonderful organizations to improve the lives of others. St. John's Outreach Committee lives out God's love and helps each of us to model Christ's compassion and support for the most vulnerable.

Thank you to our Wardens, Vestry, lay leadership, and staff for your dedication and commitment to the mission and ministries of St. John on the Mountain. On Sundays, in Outreach projects, Open Table, fellowship, in our ministries we help renew each other for the weeks and months ahead. Being

renewed in God and community fills us up so that we reenter the world able to greet each person we meet as a beloved child of God. Our work of reconciling love is even more essential in times of division.

We affirm God's call to us in the Baptismal Covenant and the Lord's willingness to walk alongside us, helping and encouraging us to build the Beloved Community in which all people, all creation, thrives. This is our hope and our shared mission. Thank you for the many ways you care and tend to St. John on the Mountain and the broader community.

St John's Nursery School: As the sponsor of the nursery school, I enjoy occasional quality time with students and teachers. One highlight is reading the nativity story at the Christmas Sing as costumed 4 years olds represent those present at the birth of Jesus. This past year, before Easter, I shared symbols of Jesus and Easter on a felt board in sessions with the 3s and 4s who were full of questions and insights.



THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?

I will, with God's help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

I will, with God's help.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

I will, with God's help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

I will, with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I will, with God's help.

BCP pp. 304-305

WARDENS' REPORT

Wardens' Report

Michelle Ray and Robert Courtemanche

A Year of Shared Faith and Service: 2025 in Review

With deep gratitude to our parishioners and for the inspiring leadership of **Pastor Beth**, we are pleased to share a review of 2025—a year defined by spiritual growth, partnership, and heartfelt service to others.

Growing Together in Faith

Now in our third year of affiliation with St. Bernard's, our two parishes have moved beyond mere cooperation. We worshipped together 14 times this year particularly in special holiday services including the beloved and "standing room only" Christmas Pageant and the delightful German Christmas Advent Coffee Hour. Our joint services have been more than just logistics; they have fostered a meaningful, grace-filled community where voices from both congregations blend for more impact. Doing more together has created more vibrant fellowship (coffee hours, luncheons, games nights) alongside increased opportunities to serve the broader community.

Outreach with Impact

Our mission of service thrived through powerful collaborations:

- **Angels' Closet:** This SJOTM conceived and led effort became an impactful two-parish volunteer opportunity bringing parishioners together to provide clothing and essential home goods to our local neighbors, ensuring no one in our community goes without.
- **The Giving Garden:** Partnering with **St. Mark's, Basking Ridge**, our three churches worked the soil to harvest **3,860** pounds of fresh vegetables, which were donated to **the Food Bank Network of Somerset County** and veterans at **VA Community Hope**.
- **Medical Debt Relief:** Together, St. John's and St. Bernard's successfully abolished **\$1,547,500** in medical debt, providing life-changing relief to families in need, as a part of the Watchung Convocation effort that raised over **\$33,000** (\$1 donation pays off **\$100** of medical debt).

Life on "The Mountain"

We are especially thankful for **St. John's Nursery School**, which continues to flourish under the dedicated leadership of **Kathy Tober and Lauren Diemer**. Serving 66 children (ages 2 to 5), the school remains a vibrant part of our campus. Pastor Beth's warm presence and regular time with the children have made a lasting impact on our youngest and their families, several of whom joined in the pageant this year.

A Call to Heart-Led Service

Our sacred spaces require constant care. Like any large home (especially one hosting a thriving nursery school!), we must balance daily maintenance with essential capital projects. We thank the **Vestry** for their vigilance and invite everyone to participate in these important stewardship efforts. Your help is needed.

As Elizabeth Andrew once said, "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."

Looking Ahead to 2026

We thank everyone who gave of their time, talent, and treasure in 2025. As we look toward 2026, we invite you to find new ways to connect through service. Whether it is:

- **Joining a Buildings & Grounds (B&G) project**
- Hosting Coffee Hour with a fresh batch of cookies
- **Joining the Altar Guild – or serving as a Lector, Usher, or Lay Eucharistic Minister once a quarter**
- Jumping into one of our many **Outreach** projects

It is through this shared fellowship that we continue to serve the greater good. As Winston Churchill famously noted, *"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."*

STEWARDSHIP

2026 Stewardship Report

Kathy Christie, Treasurer

The 2026 Operating Budget will be supported by pledges from 54 parish families totaling \$261,623. This represents a 6.5% decrease over last year which puts our budget in a deficit position. We have 4 fewer pledges versus last year including at least 3 families who moved away. This equates to a permanent loss of about \$10,000. In addition, only a few families increased their pledge from last year. We will accept pledges (or pledge increases) and contributions at any time during the year. Just let our finance manager, Angela Leavens-Smith, know by sending her an email

MUSIC

Music

During 2025, St. John's music program continued to benefit from the leadership of Director of Music, Grant Mech. The choir regularly rehearsed on Sundays before and after the 9:00 am Holy Eucharist during the program year, September-Pentecost. Starting in October, the choir has led us musically as we worshiped in the chapel once a month during the 9:00 am service. In 2025, St. John's choir had the opportunity to sing with St. Bernard's choir and St. Mark's choir during many joint services. In early 2026, we learned that Grant would be leaving the position due to other commitments and seeing better work-life balance. The choir conveyed the gratitude of both choir and parish in a lovely send off to Grant on his last Sunday, Feb. 1, 2026. Going forward we will collaborate with the Director of Music at St. Bernard's, Tyler Weakland, which will bring our 9:00 am and 11:00 am services more closely together in terms of programming and administration. Tyler will lead the 8:30 am choir rehearsal and an organist will play for both the rehearsal and 9:00 am service. We are still in the process of hiring the pianist/organist. In 2027, the parish is scheduled to receive a custom-built continuo organ from Taylor and Boody. The organs in the church and chapel are maintained by organ curator Jim Konzleman.

PASTORAL CARE & HEALING PRAYER

Joy Baird and Jody Flegel are responsible for the Pastoral Care Ministry at St. John on the Mountain, including keeping track of the Prayer List, making visits, and coordinating with pastoral care volunteers and Pastor Beth. Home Communion is available for people who cannot get to church in person. During the first half of 2025, Healing Prayer was offered on the first Sunday of the month during Communion at both Sunday services. If you would like a visit or prayers for yourself or someone else, please don't hesitate to reach out to Joy, Jody, or Pastor Beth.

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

2025 Official Acts

Baptisms	1
Confirmed	5
Received	0
Marriages	4
Funeral/Committal Services	7

2025 Worship Services

Total Number of Services	97
Eucharistic Services	89
(including 3 Communion from the Reserved Sacrament)	
Daily Office:	
Sunday Morning Prayer	1
Private /Home Communion	0
Other	7

Included in the Other category this year are Lessons & Carols, and Pastoral services (Funerals or Committals, Holy Matrimony) that were not a Eucharistic service or Daily Office.

Children's Christian Formation

Lynn Mitchell, Director of Children's Ministries

Sunday School

We are using the curriculum **Feasting on the Word**. The weekly lessons are lectionary-based. Students in grades Pre-K - 6th read or listen to the Bible story and work on a craft, project, or game related to the theme of the story.

This year we have 54 youths (nursery through 12th grade) at St. John on the Mountain, with approximately 7 attending Sunday School (Pre-K through 6th grade) on a regular basis.

Lent

For a youth Lenten project, Sunday School and Youth Group families donated baby items for families who are supported by CASA SHaW. Four laundry baskets were filled with the baby items for the families.

Easter

Children joined Lynn Mitchell in Parish Hall for the reading of an Easter children's book, and our annual Easter egg hunt was held on the church lawn following the church service.

Summer Camp

During the week of June 23rd, 10 children in grades K-6 attended Cross Roads Day Camp, "Holy Surprises," from 9am-3pm at St. Bernard's Church. Kids had fun learning songs, playing games, listening to Bible stories, and crafting. Pastor Beth and Lynn Mitchell provided snacks and lunches for the week, along with Sue Kennedy who provided pizza one day and Jane and Peter Mercer who delivered ice cream another day.

Advent and Christmas

On the first Sunday in Advent we made Advent wreaths for both kids and adults. There were 23 youth participants in the Christmas pageant this year. Children helped build the crèche at the 6pm Christmas Eve service.

Confirmation Class

On September 28, 2025, at St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Bridgewater, Bishop Sally French confirmed seven youth who had attended confirmation classes and prepared for their confirmation at St. John on the Mountain. We use the curriculum *Confirm Not Conform* for our lessons. This curriculum encourages the students to explore their beliefs and to become active in their faith. A new group of students will begin attending confirmation classes in September of 2026.

Youth Group

Students in 6th – 12th grades have been invited to attend youth group meetings on Sunday evenings approximately four times each school year. Some activities we have participated in are playing icebreaker games, enjoying meals together, working on creative service projects, and working at the food pantry in Somerville.

In February 2025, our youth group members served a variety of soups during Coffee Hour on Souper Bowl Sunday. They collected over \$600 in donations. Our SJOTM Outreach Committee matched this amount, and \$1200 was donated to the Food Bank Network of Somerset County. We also co-hosted our annual Shrove Pancake Brunch with the youth members at St. Mark's in Basking Ridge. The \$170 we collected at this event was also donated to the Food Bank Network of Somerset County.

Our youth are involved in our church community in a variety of ways. There are seven different youth who are available to help with the YouTube streaming of our Sunday morning services. One of our seniors in high school helps out on Sunday mornings as our nursery care babysitter. Many of our youth help at the food pantry in Somerville when St. John on the Mountain is in charge of providing the volunteers in November and April. Some help at Ross Farm each summer, they have helped with the sorting of donations for Angel's Closet, and they have donated and sorted baby items for CASA SHaW.

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. For Evening Prayer, we gather with parishioners from St. John on the Mountain, St. Bernard's, and St. Paul's, Morris Plains. 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.

This year we enjoyed a number of joint services with St. Bernard's, as well as with St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Basking Ridge. 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

OUTREACH

Outreach Commission

Sue Kennedy and Kathy Tober, Co-Chairs

Outreach - 2025

For 2025, the Vestry allocated \$17,000 to the Outreach Committee to address the needs of our communities. Here is what we accomplished with your money, time, and talent. Our attention continues to focus on three areas: Hunger, Shelter, and Community Needs.

HUNGER

Continues to be a big problem in Somerset County. There were more than 32,000 client visits to the Food Bank Network of Somerset County in 2024 (the numbers are not yet available for 2025 but we know it has increased) We provide volunteers twice a year - in April and November, two Saturdays in those months, to the Food Pantry that is set up in the United Methodist Church in Somerville. We continue to collect hams, turkeys, lasagnas to be given away at that Pantry during the Holiday seasons. We have a running list of items most in need at the Food Bank so please continue to read the weekly e-news for a list of those items. We continue to support God's Giving Garden, a three-church effort, at Ross Farm in Basking Ridge. In 2025 the Garden grew 3,860 pounds of produce which was distributed to the Lyons VA, the God's Co-op Food Pantry and the Food Bank Network of Somerset County. The Garden is always in need of adult volunteers. Look for the date of Blessing of the Garden sometime this Spring. It is a wonderful way to get to see firsthand the efforts that the Garden volunteers do to create a garden full of produce to help feed hungry people in our area.

SHELTER

We continue to support CASA SHaW (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties). We also bought a large number of gifts for parents and family members to "shop" at a pop-up shop in the CASA headquarters so more children could be provided with Christmas gifts. We gave 12 young people in our church families a \$100 gift card to shop for new toys and crafts for the CASA kids. The youth group provided four Baby baskets (starter kits) to CASA to be given to the parents of newborn babies. The baskets contain donated diapers, wipes, undershirts, a few outfits, bottles, bathing supplies, towel, bib, books, and a swaddling blanket.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

This year was our 2nd year of Angel's Closet. The shopping day this year was in the Bedwell School cafeteria. The event was open to all of the families in the Somerset Hills School District who receive free and reduced lunch through the school district. We also invited CASA families to come and shop as well as families in need served by Preschool Advantage. All of the items are given away for free. This year we also provided bags to every family to use as they "shopped".

We collected very gently used and brand new items donated by the community throughout the summer months. We had items stored in every square inch of the Parish House garage, in all of the offices in the Parish House, in the Meeting room of the Parish House, the apartment above the Garage, in the Choir rehearsal room.. every spare space we had, we had Angel's Closet items stored there.

After very well attended and successful sorting days in August and October, we set up in the Cafeteria on Saturday, November 15 with sale day on Sunday, November 16. This year we counted over 150 people who came through the doors. After consulting with the school nurses and guidance counselors, it was determined that brand new pillows and bedding is something that is very much needed by families in the area. So we purchased pillows and blankets with some of the Outreach funds. We are grateful to ALL who donated items, who sorted the items, who shopped for items, who set up in the Cafeteria, who attended the day of the sale, and who helped clean up after we closed our doors on Sunday afternoon so the space could be returned to the school.

We were awarded a \$10,000 grant from ECS-NJ to support Angel's Closet in 2025 and for part of 2026. We spent \$5,000 in 2025 to pay for the cafeteria rental, the cost of the POD rental (very much needed since we ran out of storage space!), and the purchase of new items for the Sale day. We are planning to do "pop-up" giveaway days in the spring and summer of items most needed by the families. We are collecting new bedding (pillows, sheets, blankets and comforters) now through Palm Sunday, March 29. Those items will be given away sometime in April.

Members of your Outreach Committee:

Sue Kennedy and Kathy Tober, Co-Chairs

Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino, Betsey Blair, Hilary Thomas Dorer, Nina Dixon, Lynn Mitchell, Lori Morris, Patty Vollmar

Outreach 2025 Expenses

Outreach 2025 Expenses		
Category	Charities	Total Expense
Hunger	Food Bank	\$600
	World Central Kitchens (to help feed people after CA Wildfires in Jan 2025)	\$500
	God's Giving Garden	\$500
		Hunger Total: \$1,600
Shelter	Homesharing	\$1,500
	CASA SHaW: Christmas Gifts	\$1,200
	Alternatives, Inc	\$1,000
		Shelter Total: \$3,700
Community Needs	Little League Team Sponsorship	\$500
	Angel's Closet	\$1796.19
	Moms on a Mission	\$1500
	Episcopal Relief and Development	\$500
	Relief for local resident's to attend funeral in South America	\$1,500
	Bishops Cup Golf Sponsorship	\$400
	Diocese of West Texas - Flood Relief	\$500
	ECS-NJ	\$4000
		Community Needs Total: \$10,696.19
		GRAND TOTAL: \$15,996.19

*Thank you all for your continued support of Outreach.
We look forward to working with you in 2026.*

EPISCOPAL COMMUNITY SERVICES OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY

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. John’s parishioner Nina Dixon is the chair of the Advisory Council. A gala with the theme “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” was held on Sept. 18, 2025,

\$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. John’s parishioners have financially supported ECS-NJ since its inception in Dec. 2020. In 2025, St. John on the Mountain contributed to the work of this important diocesan initiative out of the parish budget. 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 st 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

WATCHUNG CONVOCAATION: 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. Thanks to an anonymous match, St. John's parishioners generously donated \$12,100 to help our neighbors in need in NM and TX.

As a result of 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.

Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center

Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center, Port Murray, NJ

The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino

Website: crossroadsretreat.com

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 6th 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. Your support for Cross Roads, our Episcopal and Lutheran camp and retreat center, is much appreciated.

The Church of St. John on the Mountain Annual Meeting Ballot, March 1, 2026

Warden

- Joy Baird (2 year term)

Deputy To Diocesan Convention - Vote for 3

- Mary Courtemanche
 Nina Dixon
 Tina Mason Johnson

Delegate to Watchung Convocation - Vote for 3

- Nina Dixon
 Sue Kennedy
 Lynn Mitchell

Junior Warden: Joy Baird

Joy and her husband, Denny, joined St. John on the Mountain when they moved to New Vernon in 1992. Joy's family found a faith home at St. John's, with five of her eight grandchildren baptized here and three of them Confirmed at St. John's. Joy served on the Vestry from 2021 to 2024 and on the Steering Committee which helped launch the Affiliation. Joy serves on the Pastoral Care Committee, as a LEM, an usher, and on the Altar Guild.

ALTAR GUILD

Altar Guild

Sue Kennedy

“Altar Guild work goes on quietly behind the scene. The work is often not noticed because in normal circumstances average worshipers don’t think about the familiar scene in front of them as long as it is familiar. They don’t consider who has put the ornaments and furnishings in place or who care for them.”

from *The New Altar Guild Book* by Barbara Gent and Betty Sturges

The Altar Guild consists of four teams of 2-5 members, each responsible for preparation of the Church and Chapel altars for worship and Holy Communion one weekend a month. In addition to the weekly services, we set up for weddings, funerals, baptisms, Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter.

The fresh flower arrangements, which truly enhance our Altars, are managed by two of our members. We strongly encourage parishioners to please sign-up for flower dedications throughout the year. Flower charts are located on the bulletin board in the main hallway. There is one for the Church and one for the Chapel.

Several of our devoted and committed members have recently relocated or retired leaving the need for new volunteers to fill our teams. The commitment is minimal and flexible; one hour to set-up either on Friday or Saturday morning and fifteen minutes to set-out and clean-up after service. We welcome anyone who might consider joining our Altar Guild as either a regular or as a substitute member.

Heavenly Father, you have entrusted us with the vessels and adornments of your house. Of your mercy, grant that we may hold them in reverence and respect, and so handle them that our work may find acceptance in your sight; through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen



BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

Buildings and Grounds

Sam Murphy, Kit Falcon, Craig Johnson, Jane Mercer (Memorial Garden)

2025 was an active year in buildings and grounds. When I came onto the vestry, we were cleaning up from a burst pipe in the parish hall and nursery school. In quick succession, we had to deal with testing issues on the water system, a leak in our septic system, and then, A & M Roofing replaced the remaining parts of the slate roof that was not replaced last year. The new roofing areas included the roofing over the sanctuary, the chapel, the kitchen, and parish hall.

The roof replacement was completed during the summer in order to minimize disruption to the nursery school. Vermont Slate was used and the results were an attractive and beneficial restoration. We are in great debt to Sue Kennedy and Pete Vollmar for their administration and oversight of the roof replacement project.

We continue to be challenged by the State water testing regulations that the Church has to conform to due to our having a school on our campus and the fact our water is sourced from a well, rather than a public water supply. We changed the company we used to test our water to Garden State Labs and maintenance is done by Jersey Environmental Services.

With regard to the memorial garden, a new brass plaque was added to the low wall surface of the Memorial Garden in the autumn. This is the fourth plaque placed for internment names! Each plaque contains 30 name-listings.

Internments in 2025:

- Cathy Sutcliffe - February 23
- Lynn Sutcliffe - February 23
- Birtie Havig - February 23
- David G. Powell - April 5
- Susan M. Ely - May 17
- Joan Wakefield Millsbaugh - October 25

The vestry is working on a longer term maintenance plan. To that end, the vestry is working with Morris Engineering LLC to perform an Engineering Study of the infrastructure and components of the Church, Parish Hall, and Parish House. This study will indicate the useful life of the components, and the potential timing of repairs and replacements, along with an estimate of the costs to do so. The vestry believes this will provide an essential tool for planning future projects. We hope the study will be complete by June 2026.

Looking forward to 2026, our projects to be completed are:

- Upgrade the lighting in the main church sanctuary space.
- Upgrade the lighting in the parking lot and around the walkways.
- Improve door locks on exterior doors.
- Upgrading security cameras.
- Repair a pipe break in the attic apartment over the garage.
- Improve the garbage and recycling can areas.
- Assess the kitchen and sacristy for upgrades.
- Complete an engineering study to assess the grounds for future projects.
- And any other maintenance and immediate issues and projects that arise.

Please keep in mind that anytime anything breaks on the campus, we call professionals to make the repairs. We generally rely on professionals to do the heavy work like cleaning the gutters, fixing leaks, spackling and painting. We do not have a sexton nor a Buildings and Grounds committee to call upon to come to the church to meet professionals, oversee projects, and generally steer the *work, or even change the occasional light bulb*. We are looking for volunteers to join the Buildings + Grounds team to be good stewards for the campus. A HUGE shout out to Joe & Michelle Ray, Peter Mercer, Pastor Beth, and Sue Kennedy for coming out in the dark, the day, the rain and snow and letting folks into the church, putting recycling at the curb, changing light bulbs, and being good stewards!

ST. JOHN'S NURSERY SCHOOL

St. John's Nursery School

Kathy Tober, Director and Lauren Diemar, Assistant Director

Everyone at St. John's Nursery School (SJNS) cannot believe that we have hit the half-way mark through the year! Time is sure flying by and the year is going well. For the 2025-2026 school year, SJNS student enrollment is currently at 66 students which is even with the prior year. There are 21 students across the two 4s classes (5 days/week), 21 students in the two 3s classes (3 days/week), and 24 students in the two 2s classes (2 days/week). All 3 year-old and 4 year-old classes continue to have 2 teachers per class and both the 2s classes each have 3 teachers. Therefore, on staff there are currently a total of 6 (six) Lead Teachers and six (6) Assistant Teachers for the morning program along with a Director and Assistant Director. There is also one (1) afternoon-only staff who assists with the afternoon program of Lunch Bunch and Enrichment Classes. Pastor Beth continues to be the School Sponsor for state licensing purposes.

The curriculum of study for the current year was established by Lauren Diemar, Assistant Director, along with all the teachers. Our units of study are as follows : 1) as always, the first unit was the "*Beginning of the Year*" unit which was completed by all classes and included school routines and classroom community; 2) the second unit was "*Clothing*" for the 4s & 2s, and "*Trees*" for the 3s; 3) currently ongoing the 4s and 2s are studying "*Exercise (Olympics)*", and the 3s are learning about "*Bread*"; 4) after the current units, the 4s will study "*Pets*", the 3s will move into a unit on "*Roads*", and the 2s will learn about "*Containers*"; 5) and before school ends, our final topics will be "*Gardening*" for the 4s, "*Reduce, Reuse, Recycle*" for the 3s, and "*Light*" for the 2s. These "studies" are 4-6 weeks where children engage in in-depth studies of topics relevant to their lives, asking questions and discovering answers through exploration and discovery, rather than traditional rote memorization and isolated learning.

The administrators received a retirement letter from Tricia Porter announcing that she will retire after the current school year. Tricia has been one of the Lead Teachers for the 4s class for the past six years and will be greatly missed. The search for a replacement is underway. Our license to operate expires in June 2026 so we are currently undergoing the process of relicensing with the State of NJ Department of Children and Families (DCF).

In terms of improvements to the facilities, the SJNS Board of Trustees has agreed with the Administrators that a long-term plan for an upgrade of our external areas is needed. As such, the Board will convene an ad hoc committee composed of board members, parents, staff and the Vestry which will be charged with developing a proposal to be approved by the Board and eventually the Vestry.

As of this school year we have officially switched to a rolling admissions process. This means that 1) anyone can submit applications to enroll their child up to two (2) years in advance of their start date; 2) the "priority registration" period for current SJNS families and church members that usually took place in January is no longer pertinent as anyone can apply at any time. With regards to registration for the upcoming school year (2026-2027), we already have 14 applications for our 2s program, our 3s program has a waitlist of 5 students, and our 4s program is looking as though it is more than full as well. We also have one (1) student who has already applied for the 2s program starting in 2027-2028. A reminder of the rolling admission process will be sent in early March to existing and alumni families to capture younger siblings who will want to be put on the list for 2027-2028 and 2028-2029 school years.

The Board of Trustees approved a tuition increase of three-percent (3%) resulting 2026-2027 tuition rates for the morning only program as follows: 1) 4s class (5 days/week) - \$8,058; 2) 3s class (3 days/week) - \$5,323; 3) 2s class (2 days/week) - \$3,821.

SJNS continues to partner with Preschool Advantage, a non-profit organization that provides scholarships to families of 3 and 4 year olds who might otherwise be unable to afford the tuition of a nursery school program and the St. John's Scholarship continues to offer funding for students in need of assistance. SJNS is always excited to welcome new families into the school community and always enjoy giving tours of our special school to any interested families. Please contact Lauren or Kathy at director@sjotm.org to schedule a tour and obtain application materials.

BUDGET & FINANCE

2025 Financial Report

Kathy Christie, Treasurer

2025 Financial Results

St. John's ended 2025 with an operating deficit of (\$15,219). This was based on income of \$364,205 and expenses totaling \$379,415. While this is a significant deficit, pledge payments of about \$12,000 missed the December 31st cut off to be included as income in 2025. The cash was received in January 2026.

Actual Income was about \$11,000 better than budgeted even with the miss on pledges noted above. This number was primarily helped by robust income from Parish Hall rentals of \$15,380. In addition, we received a donation from a parishioner's estate which put contributions well ahead of budget. Each year our income is supplemented by a 3.5% distribution from our endowment (per SJOTM investment policy) to help offset operating expenses.

Total Operating Expenses exceeded budget by about \$21,000. **Buildings & Grounds, Insurance and Office** expenses exceeded budget by \$33,000 in total. Building maintenance was over by \$15K due to HVAC and plumbing issues. Landscape expenses were over by \$10K due to snow plowing. Utilities expenses were over by \$7K. **Program** expenses were over budget by \$1,500. **Personnel** expense was better than budget by \$12,000 due to open administrator and finance positions for part of the year. The Nursery School contributed \$30,000 to cover their portion of our building, utility, and insurance expenses.

Investment Review As noted in the chart below, St. John's investment portfolio is in an excellent position. The endowment (held in a Fidelity Investments account and managed by Peapack Private) had a return of 15.9% in 2025. Per our investment policy, 4.5% of the account balance at Dec. 31st of the prior year is distributed annually; 3.5% goes to supplement operating expenses and 1% goes to capital reserve.

Investment Account Balances	2025	2024
Operating Checking (Provident)	\$80,843	\$99,184
Memorial Garden (Provident)	\$30,003	\$0
Choral Account (Provident)	\$15,002	\$0
Endowment Account (Fidelity)	\$1,491,717	\$1,381,788
SJNS Scholarship (Fidelity)	\$118,147	\$115,430
Capital Improvement (Fidelity)	\$389,921	\$323,893
Construction Loan	(\$50,000)	(\$50,000)
Total Assets	\$2,075,633	\$1,870,295

2026 Operating Budget

The current year's budget, approved by the Vestry on January 12th, plans for a deficit at year end of (\$13,593) driven primarily by a 6.5% decrease in dollars pledged and a 5% increase in expenses. SJNS will again contribute \$30,000 towards expenses.

Program Expenses decreased for 2026 due to reduction in choral expense paid from the budget. Costs for paid singers will be covered by the funds in a Provident savings account.

Personnel Expenses are budgeted to be increased from last year. The number includes the appropriate compensation increases for Pastor Beth as designated by the Diocese. We also expect to have a full staff for 2026.

Operating Expenses are budgeted to increase about 10% in 2026. The increase is in insurance premiums, office supplies, and buildings & grounds. The number does not plan for unexpected major repairs to the buildings or grounds as happened in 2025.

External Expenses will remain even to 2025. Diocesan pledge remains at \$40,000. And Mission Outreach is \$15,000.

Capital Expenses in 2026 will be covered by funds in the Capital Improvement account at Fidelity. Several planned capital projects for 2026 include: Sanctuary Lighting, Walkway & Parking Lighting, Kitchen renovation, Sacristy renovation, and Parish House bathroom renovation.

**St. John on the Mountain
2023 Financial Results and 2024 Operating Budget**

		<u>2025 Budget</u>	<u>2025 Actual</u>	<u>2026 Budget</u>
No. Pledges		58	58	54
Pledge Amount		\$279,867	\$279,867	\$261,623
Average Pledge		\$4,825	\$4,825	\$4,845
<u>Income</u>				
	Pledge Income	\$271,471	\$252,870	\$265,774
	Contributions	\$25,000	\$41,019	\$25,000
	Space Rental	\$3,000	\$15,380	\$15,000
	Altar Guild/Flowers/Music	\$5,000	\$6,747	\$5,000
	Interest Income	\$100	\$56	\$100
	Fundraisers	\$0	(\$230)	
	Investment Income	\$48,362	\$48,363	\$52,500
	Total Income	\$352,933	\$364,205	\$363,374
<u>Expenses</u>				
Programs				
	Altar Guild	\$7,000	\$6,579	\$6,000
	Music	\$8,000	\$9,172	\$3,000
	Worship	\$3,000	\$2,928	\$3,000
	Christian Ed	\$1,200	\$2,846	\$1,200
	Sunday Nursery	\$2,100	\$1,500	\$2,100
	Visiting Clergy	\$1,800	\$616	\$1,800
	Fellowship	\$2,000	\$3,121	\$2,000
	Total Programs	\$25,100	\$26,762	\$19,100
	Personnel	\$155,312	\$143,378	\$ 168,081
Operations				
	Building & Grounds	\$83,180	\$120,073	\$95,000
	Contingency	\$2,500	\$0	
	Office	\$23,500	\$23,931	\$25,000
	Insurance	\$38,415	\$38,113	\$42,000
	Conference & Education	\$2,787	\$477	\$2,787
	Expense covered by SJNS	(\$30,000)	(\$29,327)	(\$30,000)
	Total Operations	\$120,382	\$153,267	\$134,787
	Total Internal Expense	\$300,794	\$323,407	\$ 321,968
	Rector's Discretionary		(\$1,990)	
	ECS-NJ	\$2,000	\$4,000	0
	Mission Outreach	\$15,000	\$15,996	\$15,000
	Diocesan Pledge	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
	Total External Expense	\$57,000	\$58,006	\$55,000
	Total Expenses	\$357,794	\$381,413	\$376,968
	Net Income	(\$4,861)	(\$17,208)	\$ (13,594)
	Capital Expense	\$0	\$310,570	



QUALIFICATION OF VOTERS

CANON 49: Sections 2 and 4. (DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY) THE VOTERS SHALL BE BAPTIZED, AT LEAST SIXTEEN (16) YEARS OF AGE, DOMICILED IN THE PARISH, OR ADJACENT THERETO, OF GOOD MORAL CHARACTER, ADHERING TO THIS CHURCH AND TO NO OTHER RELIGIOUS BODY, REGULAR ATTENDANTS AT THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH IN SAID PARISH, MEANING THEREBY THOSE WHO ARE MORE FREQUENTLY PRESENT THAN ABSENT UNLESS FOR GOOD CAUSE PREVENTED AND REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS TO THE CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE PARISH FOR SIX MONTHS NEXT BEFORE THE SAID ANNUAL MEETING IN THE MANNER PRESCRIBED BY THE VESTRY OF SAID PARISH... (HAVING) RECEIVED HOLY COMMUNION AT LEAST THRICE IN THE PRECEDING YEAR.

✠ **THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN ON THE MOUNTAIN** ✠
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WARDENS & VESTRY

WARDENS

Michelle Ray & Bob Courtemanche

Class of 2027

Craig Johnston, Peter Mercer,
Dan Zielinski

Class of 2028

Kit Falcon, Beth Murphy,
Sam Murphy, Lynda Stadtmueller

Treasurer

Kathy Christie