

## **A Year in Review at Saint Mary Anne's Episcopal Church, 2021**

At year-end, we take an opportunity to review our ministry with “A Year in Review”. It helps remind us of church activities, provides a historic record, and offers an outline for our more in-depth Annual Reports required for the January Annual Meeting.

This Review, like our 2020 one, shows our continued commitment to worship, gather, and work toward our mission and ministry, despite the extraordinary circumstances of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Masks, social distancing, a permanent church HVAC air purification system, and for a time, reservations, were just some of the protocols instituted to protect worshippers. With the availability of vaccines early this year, many parishioners returned to “in-person worship”—and weekly church attendance now hovers at 62% of pre-pandemic numbers. Unfortunately, new virus variants (Delta and Omicron) continue to threaten and challenge us as we approach the New Year. To see how we persevere, please read on...

### **Worship**

- Due to an increase in COVID infections, Bishop San ordered in-person worship suspended for a second time on December 13, 2020 until January 17, 2021. We recorded services to post to our YouTube channel for at home viewing (the only worship participants included Fr. John, musicians, and a lector). Inside worship resumed at our parish on January 24, 2021 and continues with protocols in place.
- During this pandemic, communal use of the chalice was suspended. The Bishop recently authorized chalice and wafer intinction with safe protocols; and use is dependent on COVID surges.
- Our Sacramental Report for the year: **7** Baptisms; **4** marriages; **14** funerals/memorial services.
- Beyond our weekly Sunday 8 and 10AM services, we celebrated special services: a New Year's Day service; two Ash Wednesday services; Holy Week: Evening Prayer and Vespers services, Maundy Thursday, Night Watch, Good Friday, three Easter Sunday services; Thanksgiving Day Service; Advent Evening Prayer Service; and two Christmas Eve and one Christmas Day service.
- We celebrate a weekly Eucharist Rite II service on Wednesdays at 10AM (with brief meditation and no music).
- Bishop San visited our parish on Pentecost Sunday, May 23.
- Andy Flood retired from his role as Acolyte Director after 20 years of devoted service. Mac McMullen has now assumed the role.
- Once a month, Fr. John offers Communion to the residents at Victoria Park Senior Housing. Calvert Manor Healthcare visits with services and communion are sporadic due to COVID outbreaks at the facility. Bill and Carol Weisel, and Linda Gibeck assist.
- We celebrated St. Francis Day Blessing of the Animals in our Churchyard with a Mass on Grass Service. Approximately 90 parishioners and their pets participated.
- During Advent, we had a moving Voices of Mary presentation in which many female parishioners portrayed “Mary”.
- We have four new seasonal altar banners designed and stitched by Karen Schaeffer (Lent, Ordinary time, Baptism, and Christmas). The Baptism banner was dedicated to Andrea Pugh, Treasurer and Altar Guild Directress, for her years of service to the parish.
- Our worship space continues to remain beautiful, clean and sacred with the combined efforts of our Altar Guild and Flower Committee.

### **Music & Technology**

- Joel Alarcon, our Director of Music and his wife Shelly Ray, lead our beautiful worship music each week.
- Alex Bi, our Choir Director, continues to lead our Virtual Choir. Our talented choir members safely and beautifully sing from the comfort of their homes; then, Alex composes, arranges and mixes their voices for our weekly Offertory Anthems. At Christmas, the choir returned to church for their first “live” performance since March 2020.

- Rick Waterhouse joins our musicians with his guitar and vocals on occasion for Sunday worship. Judy Coudon beautifully sang a solo for our Voices of Mary presentation during Advent.
- We updated our audio/video capabilities with new video cameras, microphones, and speakers. We can now “Livestream” our services to an at-home audience. The audio system greatly improves the worship experience for those with diminished hearing.
- Our St. Mary Anne’s YouTube channel allows parishioners online access to our service recordings, Virtual Choir songs, and special videos. Alli and Leah Thress, and MacKenzie Strobel, assist us each week with Livestream recording of our 10AM Sunday services.
- Four students from our St. Mary Anne String Studio, under the direction of Joel Alarcon, participated in worship on Pentecost Sunday.

### **Education**

- Due to the pandemic, our Adult Forums and our in-person Church School classroom instruction are on hiatus. Children and teens who attend worship services are encouraged to participate as Acolytes, Lectors, Ushers, Technology Acolytes, and Altar Guild members.
- Fr. John gifted and mailed *The Jesus Story Book Bible* to parishioners identified as parents or grandparents of young children. In coordination, Alli and Leah Thress, two of our parish youth, created St. Mary Anne Storytime videos to accompany the book. Their mom, Shelly Ray Alarcon, is the narrator. Joel accompanies the story with background music. The collection of these nine charming videos is found on our YouTube channel.
- We offered Lenten Bags, created by Janice Flood, for individuals and families to help deepen their Lenten experience.
- Benigna Polanco, a recent high school graduate parishioner and Altar Guild member, received the “Dream Big” Scholarship in June.
- Bishop San confirmed Kayla Lanouette, Sam Palonco, Leah Thress, and Sarah Swoboda at our 10:00AM Pentecost Sunday service. The Bishop also officially received into the parish: Eraina Kay Fischer, and Mac and Jacquie McMullen. Confirmation instructors: Richard Starr and Karen Schaeffer; Confirmation mentor: Janice Flood.
- Our Youth Group met via Zoom under the direction of Janice Flood; then in September, resumed in-person meetings. A small group of youth now meet twice a month in the Parish Hall and enjoy pizza and conversation under the direction of Joe Flood and Marlene Coffey.
- A dedicated EfM class, led by Carol Weisel, continued their studies in September. They meet once a week on Monday evenings from September thru May.
- A Bible Study, led by Fr. John, met on Tuesday evenings from 7-8:15 on Zoom. In the winter, the class completed a 13-week study by N.T. Wright on Ephesians. Then, the class spent 16 weeks studying St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians.
- In the fall, a group of parishioners and community members studied and conversed on “Sacred Ground”, a national Episcopal Church program on racism and reconciliation. Janice Flood facilitated the local program.
- We now offer a weekly copy of "The Sunday Paper" (ages 9 and up) and "The Sunday Paper Junior" (ages 3 to 10). Each graphic lesson follows our Sunday lectionary readings. We attach it to our Friday Enews for Sunday worship, and have copies available on Sunday mornings.

### **Mission**

- Our Mission Committee identified worthwhile local, national, and international charities, and distributed monies from the Sturgeon Fund. (The 2021 Annual Report will detail Mission Committee numbers and budget).
- We assist the Paris Foundation of Elkton with their homeless population outreach. We provide a simple bagged meal, for approximately 70 people, on the first Tuesday of the month for eight months during the year.

### **Outreach**

- Donne Lewis our Outreach Coordinator, and volunteers, work in our Outreach Office three days a week (9:00AM-12:30PM; M, W, Sat.). We distribute food, both federal and locally donated, to families in need. (The 2021 Annual Report will detail Outreach numbers and budget).
- With help from school guidance counselors, we identified a group of local schoolchildren, and their families, in need of food assistance. From January 2-March 30, 2021, these families received a bi-weekly box/bag of food for 3-4 meals. Christy & Hannah Sadler and Dana Cain led this effort.
- Parishioners supported our Heart & Sole Ministry and donated 52 pairs of sneakers for disadvantaged students at North East Elementary. Pat Wagner coordinated this program in October.
- The ECW began “Women Helping Women”, an initiative to assist women at an Elkton women’s shelter. At their Christmas Soup Dinner in December, female parishioners donated 30 new robes, 24 pairs of slippers, and 4 sets of pajamas. Andrea Pugh and Wendy Gilbert managed this effort.
- Our Giving Tree Project, led by Linda Hunt, helped 38 children from Charlestown Elementary School, a foster baby, and 6 boys from a group home with Christmas gifts through our Giving Tree Program.

### **Pastoral**

- The pandemic continued to limit our pastoral efforts and prohibited visits to hospitals and long-term care facilities. Many physically fragile parishioners remain unable to have visits at their home, too. We offer pastoral visits by Fr. John and/or our pastoral team when deemed “safe” or “allowed” by family members or facilities.
- The ECW (Episcopal Church Women) hosted funeral receptions for the Lemasters and Green families.
- A group of parishioners provided a number of meals, and some doctor visit rides, for a critically ill parishioner and family.
- Our Parish Prayer Chain continues; our Prayer Shawl Ministry knits and packages prayer blankets for distribution to those in need.

### **Events & Fellowship**

- Due to the pandemic, all traditional church events from January through September were canceled (Train Day, Valentine’s Day Lunch, Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, monthly Recovery Church Service and Meals, The Garden Market, 2:42 Men’s breakfasts, the Church Picnic, and the ECW Picnic).
- Our Gardening Team held a Plant Sale on Hoopes Court in early May. Proceeds of \$1500.00 benefited the Gardening Team budget.
- Refreshments on Hoopes Court, following each Sunday Service, replaced inside Coffee Hours until October.
- In October, parishioners and community members continued to grow the Thompson Crocus Lawn in our historic churchyard with an additional planting of 6700 donated crocus bulbs.
- In October, the ECW began “Wednesday Women”, a monthly-catered lunch in the Parish Hall. They meet on the third Wednesday of the month, from 11:30-1PM for lunch and fellowship.
- On Thursdays, R.O.M.E.O.’s (Retired Old Men Eating Out), meet for breakfast at a local restaurant. Late in the year, the 2:42 Men’s group restarted their monthly breakfast meeting in the Parish Hall.
- Our Christmas Cookie Walk returned on December 11, with much participation from the parish and public, and earned approximately \$1600.00 in proceeds for the ECW budget.
- Our sixth Annual Wreaths across America was on December 18 under the direction of Julia Swoboda and family. Fr. John offered the noontime prayer on Hoopes Court prior to the placement of over 90 wreaths on veteran’s graves.

### **Administrative & Notables**

- We voted Linda Gibeck to our Vestry, and incumbents Judy Coudon and Phyllis Doyle to a second term.
- At the March Diocesan Convention, the Diocese awarded our St. Mary Anne's String Studio a \$2500.00 grant to make lessons (violin, viola, piano, bass guitar, guitar) available to students (ages 5-18) regardless of ability to afford private lessons. In turn, four students benefited from this grant.
- News of our recently established Thompson Memorial Crocus Lawn made the national Episcopal News Service in March.
- We said goodbye to Financial Assistant Judy Lynch and her husband Pat when they moved to Delaware in June. We welcomed Judy Coudon and Barb England to assist Andrea Pugh our Treasurer.
- We reinstituted the Vestry Person of the Week (VPOW), in which a Vestry member is present at each service to greet parishioners with Fr. John and available for questions.
- We received a \$9,000.00 grant from the Maryland Recovery Now grant funds in September. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development awarded this grant request to help with our new audio/visual system costs. Due to the pandemic, our church needed critical technological updates to our audio system for Livestream capabilities.
- A committee, led by Finance Chair Dru Torregrossa, reviewed the parish's financial policies and procedures. The Vestry voted upon and approved their recommended changes.

### **Community & Diocesan Engagement**

- Our delegates attended the annual Diocesan Convention in early March via Zoom.
- After we instituted safe protocols, four local recovery groups (2 NA, AA and Al Anon) returned to Parish Hall meetings.
- Fr. John remains a Board member of Upper Bay and Counseling Services.
- In June, we had a Blessing of the Boats and an informal worship service at the Town of N.E. pier and park. A local Lutheran minister and his praise band, along with Joel Alarcon, also participated.
- Fr. John gave an invocation at the Salute to Veteran's July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks event at the park.
- We participated in the "Stepping for Heroes--We will Never Forget" 9/11 remembrance event at the North East firehouse. Fr. John offered prayers for first responders. Our church bell rang for a minute at 8:47am to commemorate when the first plane hit the World Trade Center. Thanks to bell ringer parishioners, and former fire fighters, Bill Weisel and Charlie Kornsey.

### **Building & Grounds**

We continue our efforts to maintain our historic property and campus for future generations, and to make them more serviceable, safe and comfortable for our parishioners and guests. Monies used for these efforts do not come from pledge dollars and operating income but from a combination of preservation funds (given by generous predecessors), and specially designated gifts, and grants (see 2021 Annual Report for details). Thankfully, parishioners often provide much skilled volunteer labor and graciously donate items and personal equipment to help contain costs.

#### **The Church & Vestry House**

- Installation of a new audio/visual system including Livestream capability, additional speakers, cameras and microphones.

#### **Churchyard & Campus Grounds**

- A new heritage sign greets the community on South Main Street. Parishioner and mason, Brian Hall, built the monument brick structure. Montauk Signs from Long Island, NY constructed the black and gold lettered sign. LED lights on a dusk to dawn sensor illumine the structure and sign at night. Vestry member Phyllis Doyle led the project. Additional granite work and a dedication will occur in 2022. Funds for this project given by the Lemasters estate.
- A major storm drainage system was installed in the churchyard (funding information to be provided in the 2021 Annual Report).

- A local mason sealed the granite wall capstones to prevent water damage; widened the wall entrance near Parish Center; and repaired the crumbling wall at the river's edge.
- Thirty-two parishioners spruced up our church, churchyard and riverbank, during an April Church Clean-up Day.
- We replaced the four large square canister lights surrounding the church with energy efficient LED light fixtures.
- Our Garden Team led by Sande Taylor, consistently maintains our campus flowerbeds, planters, and rose bushes—especially near the Vestry House, the Christine Cameron Memorial Garden, in front of the church and Hoopes Court, and the Mary Lutz Garden near the Parish Center.
- Three large trees near the Sexton House, diseased and/or damaged by storms, were cut down and removed.
- Parishioners continued to grow the Thompson Memorial Crocus Lawn by planting 6700 donated crocus bulbs.
- The Holly tree, adjacent to South Main Street, was dressed with Christmas lights by parishioner Vicki Icenhour. In solidarity with Cecil County Tourism Board and the Town of North East's "Winter Lights, Cecil Nights" program, we will keep the lights on through February 2022.

#### **Parish Center**

- Outdated fluorescent bulbs replaced with energy efficient LED lights.

#### **Rectory**

- The small shed, behind rectory, has a new metal roof thanks to Tim Leizear.

#### **Sexton House**

- The Green Team continues to establish a bee and butterfly garden, and are creating a landscape plan for the wharf.

#### **Wharf**

- Renewed lease for Bay Venture Outfitters (kayak rentals)