
EPISCOPAL CHURCH of the
HEAVENLY REST

God's Love. For All.

2024
ANNUAL REPORT

2024 Annual Report

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Sunday, February 2, 2025

AGENDA

- Call to Order and Determine Quorum – Kate Haney, Senior Warden
- Opening Prayer – The Reverend David F. Romanik, Rector
- Approval of minutes from the 2024 Annual Meeting
- Report of the Nominating Committee – Lisa Goolsby
- Nominations & Elections:
 - Vestry (Elect 4 – first ballot a majority is required or election by acclamation; second ballot a plurality will be requested.)
 - Diocesan Convention Delegates (Elect 8 delegates and 4 alternates – on the first ballot a majority is required; second ballot a plurality will be requested.)
- 2024 Financial Summary – Sam Cutbirth, Treasurer
- 2025 Budget – Sam Cutbirth
- 2025 Stewardship Report – Kate Haney – Recognition of Stewardship Chairs, Rick Willis and Sarah Ferguson
- Foundation Report – Thomas Choate
- Vestry Committee Reports (Buildings and Grounds, Ministry, Administration) – filed by title
- Thrift House Report (filed by title)
- St. John’s Episcopal School Report (filed by title)
- Rector’s Report
- Parish Appreciations – The Reverend David F. Romanik
- Reading of the Necrology
- Election Results and Second Ballot (if necessary) – Kate Haney
- Commissioning of Vestry, Delegates, and Parish Officers
- Benediction – The Reverend David F. Romanik
- Adjournment – Kate Haney

The new Vestry will meet briefly in the Gen Von Ende room following the meeting.

2024 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order:

Senior Warden, Annabel House, called the meeting to order at 12:02pm.

Prayer and Invocation: The Rev. David Romanik, Rector, gave the invocation.

Approval of Minutes from Last Annual Meeting:

A motion was made by Yvonne Batts to accept the minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Mike Denny. Motion carried.

Nominations and Elections:

Nominating Committee members were Darryl Tippens (chair), Yvonne Batts, David Christianson, Connie Collier, Sarah Ferguson, Katie Gloyna, Gerry Lawler, Candy Scarborough, Josh Stearns, Rick Willis, and Annabel House.

Vestry nominees were David Christianson, Michael Christie, Sharon Lawler, and Diane Stearns (for three-year terms) and Harry Hurt for a one-year term. Annabel asked for nominations from the floor, there were none. Steve Strain then moved we accept the slate of Vestry nominees by acclamation. Candy Scarborough seconded. The motion carried and the slate was accepted.

Delegate nominees were:

Michael Christie

Kathy Drury

Jim Fitzhugh

Tyler Gurley

Lee Hampton

Sue McWilliams

Karrie Partin

Mary Reyes

Josh Stearns

Jan Walker

Rick Willis

Bijoux Mashauri

There were no nominations from the floor.

Bylaws Changes:

Annabel presented the eight proposed bylaws changes to bring us in line with the church's canons. They are summarized in the 2023 Annual Report. Noreen Mansell made the motion to approve the proposed bylaws as written and Kate Haney seconded. Motion passed. Fr. David shared that Mike Langford was chair of the committee when the amendments were put together. He was thankful for Mike's leadership.

2023/2024 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Sam Cutbirth- 2023 Budget

For 2023	Budgeted	Actual
Income	1,302,256.73	1,312,085.16
Expenses	1,302,256.73	1,291,193.33

For 2024	Budgeted
Income	1,255,729.28
Expenses	1,255,729.28

Approved Expenditures

Worship and Music	18.5%	\$232,310
Pastoral Care Ministry	9.2%	\$115,527
Outreach Ministry	21.5%	\$269,982
Christian Formation Ministry	13%	\$163,245
Buildings and Grounds	19.3%	\$242,355
Church Office and Administration	18.5%	\$232,310

Each year, If there is a shortfall between income and actual expenses, the church borrows from the Operating Fund Reserve. This money is to be paid back. The reserve is there to support the church budget.

Stewardship:

Judy Godfrey & John Walton were co-chairs.

These are the 2024 amounts to date. There were 33 new pledges! There are some pledges outstanding and there is still time to make a pledge.

Pledges	Number	Amount
2024	201	\$1,035,705.88
2023	194	\$1,077,838.82

Foundation Report: Tom Choate

Annabel introduced Tom Choate, Chair of the Foundation Board. Tom named the other board members Tom, Yvonne Batts, Mike Denny, Steve Strain, Paul Fulham, and the Senior Warden. Annabel House is the Treasurer, Elizabeth Wallace is the Counsel, and Lee Hampton is the financial advisor.

Tom reported that it was a good year for the Foundation. The year-end balance was \$4,925,727, up 13.44%. The spend rate was 4.5%. These funds are used for charitable work and for designated areas. They are not part of the church budget but allow the church to go above and beyond. If members would like to start a designated fund it takes a minimum of \$10,000. Members can also make a gift to existing funds.

Address: Jay Moore

Fr. David announced that February 4th has been designated as the Feast Day of Parson Gerhart. He introduced local historian Jay Moore who gave a presentation on Parson Gerhart. "The way we live is our confession of faith."

From the Rector Fr. David Romanik

Fr. David thanked Jay for his presentation. He then discussed the past year and noted that the Committee Annual Reports would be filed by title.

Parish Appreciations Fr. David Romanik

Fr. David shared that longtime children's choir director Shelly Reed is retiring and remarked on her long and loving service to our community. Laura Dickson will take her place.

He told us that when Sharon and Nolan Kelley moved, the staff was in a quandary about hospitality. Robert Becerra and Adrian Smith have stepped up and filled the gap.

All members of the CHR staff serve us well: Rev. Corrie Cabes, Rev. Amanda Watson, Rev. Doug Thomas, Deacon Karen Boyd, Deacon Russell Dickerson, Bikole Mulanda, Thomas Pavlechko, Steve Gibbs, LeighAnna Morris, Carol Ann Weston, Luke Mendez, Austin Hackel, Dorothy Guerra, Anne Jones and her team and volunteer Verger Don Roberts. Fr. David loves working with them.

Fr. David also recognized retiring Vestry members- Connie Collier, Sarah Ferguson, Darryl Tippens, and Annabel House.

Election Results - Annabel House

Vestry:

David Christianson, Michael Christie, Sharon Lawler, and Diane Stearns (for three-year terms) and Harry Hurt for a one-year term.

Convention Delegates:

Kathy Drury, Jim Fitzhugh,
Lee Hampton, Bijoux Mashauri,
Sue McWilliams, Mary Reyes,
Josh Stearns, Rick Willis

Alternates: Michael Christie, Karrie Partin, Tyler Gurley, Jan Walker

Installation of Parish Officers, Vestry and Delegates for 2024 - David Romanik

Fr. David led the installation and announced that Kate Haney will be our Senior Warden.

Benediction

Father David gave the benediction.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm. A brief Vestry meeting followed.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Young, Clerk

2025 NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS

Vestry (Elect 4 - first ballot majority required or election by acclamation; second ballot plurality will be requested.)

Three Year Term

- Kimberly Brumley
- Dru Hall
- Mary Reyes

One Year Term

- Harry Hurt

Diocesan Convention Delegates (Elect 8 delegates and 4 alternates - first ballot majority required; second ballot plurality will be requested.)

- Connie Collier, L’Nae Craig, Cheryl Holmes, Dustin Rainwater, Jay Moore, Meg Garcia, Bush Ramsey, Carol Ramsey, David Byerly, Amy Eddington, Sarah Martin, and Bijoux Mashauri.



Dru Hall



Mary Reyes



Kimberly Brumley



Harry Hurt

2024

FINANCIAL SUMMARY



EXPLANATION OF 2024 FINANCIALS

As noted in the Rector's Report, the Accounting Department at Heavenly Rest experienced some turmoil over the course of 2024. While we are confident that the information that follows accurately represents the financial position of the parish, there are a few items that are worthy of explanation:

- The overspend in staff salaries can be attributed to the fact that we were without an Assistant Sexton for several months, and other employees had to work overtime to cover those responsibilities. With the hiring of an Assistant Sexton, overtime expenditures should be more in line with expectations.
- The overspend for the Diocesan Apportionment line reflects the fact that we erroneously paid the Diocese for 13 months worth of apportionment, rather than 12. The 2025 Budget has been amended to adjust for this error.
- The overspend in food includes the meals provided for Diocesan Convention, which was supposed to be covered by the Foundation, and also the first Twelfth Night Feaste, which is now a ticketed event. The line also does not include any contributions that were made for Wednesday night suppers. We are working to rectify these discrepancies.
- The overspend for utilities was the result of a misunderstanding of the Facilities Outreach commitment of the Foundation. That misunderstanding has been rectified.
- There are several items included in the repairs and maintenance line that were intended to be paid from other sources, namely the Foundation. Those items are being investigated.
- Several gifts were made for specific events or programs that are not directly reflected in the financial report (e.g., the event at the Zoo). We are hopeful that items like these will be better reflected in the financial report going forward.

The financials clearly point to a need for us to pay closer attention to expenses. With the transition in the Accounting Department complete, this should be much more feasible.

**EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HEAVENLY REST
BUDGET VS. ACTUALS: 2024 OPERATING BUDGET**

	Total	
Income		
1-4120-99 Non-Pledge Contributions (plate)	165,402.39	87,000.00
1-4130-99 Current Year Pledge	1,003,723.32	1,065,145.88
1-4140-99 Good Friday	0.00	
1-4200-99 Rental Income	700.00	4,000.00
1-4300-99 Interest Income	1.28	
Total Income	\$ 1,169,826.99	
Gross Profit	\$ 1,169,826.99	1,156,145.88
Expenses		
	(174 = \$6,723.14)	
1-5000-01 Clergy Salary, Insurance, Pension	239,982.42	273,070.96
1-5110-10 Staff Salary, Insurance, Pension	503,151.00	476,569.31
1-5190-99 Diocesan Apportionment	192,207.64	170,840.00
1-5195-99 Outreach Committee Fund	3,103.67	10,000.00
1-5200-99 Building Insurance	83,799.00	84,895.00
1-5205-99 WC Insurance	3,154.25	3,854.00
1-5215-99 Hospitality House	1,984.72	1,500.00
1-5220-99 Repairs & Maintenance	72,279.84	53,000.00
1-5224-99 Janitorial	8,963.12	7,000.00
1-5225-99 Utilities	55,873.30	41,000.00
1-5230-99 Accounting/Bank Charges	39,522.12	15,000.00
1-5231-99 Giving Fees	2,001.36	4,500.00
1-5235-99 Office	14,928.79	4,000.00
1-5240-99 Postage	3,027.45	3,500.00
1-5245-99 Telephone	1,642.11	2,000.00
1-5250-99 Printing Expense	25,634.09	24,000.00
1-5255-99 Stewardship	2,668.26	2,500.00
1-5260-99 Kitchen Expenses	110.28	1,500.00
1-5265-99 Publicity/Website Maint	517.76	500.00
1-5285-99 Diocesan Convention	3,952.59	2,000.00
1-5290-99 IT/Computer Expenses	16,824.76	12,000.00
1-5291-99 Livestream Expenses	454.62	-
1-5295-99 Childrens Christian Edcat	1,551.61	4,000.00
1-5300-99 Youth	1,817.08	1,000.00
1-5305-99 Family Ministry Supplies	4,129.64	3,500.00
1-5306-99 Family Leaders	1,008.36	500.00

1-5310-99 Adult Christian Education	981.97	1,666.67
1-5311-99 EST Expense	1,046.48	1,166.67
1-5312-99 EYA	2,701.17	1,166.67
1-5315-99 Safety & Security	18,458.60	20,000.00
1-5316-99 Vestry	178.18	1,000.00
1-5320-99 Worship Expenses	3,060.47	5,000.00
1-5325-99 Food	36,840.31	9,000.00
Carillon		1,000.00
Childrens Choir		3,000.00
Hand Bells		1,000.00
1-5334-99 Sheet Music	1,662.70	3,000.00
1-5339-99 Organ Maintenance	1,258.46	1,500.00
1-5340-99 Piano Maintenance	270.00	1,500.00
1-5355-99 Special Programs	-325.08	600.00
1-5356-99 Blessing @ the Zoo	3,260.00	300.00
1-5357-99 Rally Day	690.08	300.00
1-5359-99 Parish Christmas Party	-936.42	300.00
1-5360-99 Guest Speakers/Contract	1,098.56	2,000.00
4-5176 Evangelism & Special Events	187.70	
Uncategorized Expense	0.00	
Total Expenses	\$ 1,354,723.02	1,255,729.28
Net Operating Income	-\$ 184,896.03	
Net Income	-\$ 184,896.03	(99,583.40)

174 Pledge Units \$1,354,723/174 = \$7,785.76 per pledge

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HEAVENLY REST BUDGET OVERVIEW: 2025 OPERATING BUDGET

Plate Offering	95,000.00
Current Year Pledge	1,111,064.53
Other Income	3,000.00
Loan from Oper Fnd Reserv	11,452.51
TOTAL INCOME	1,220,517.04

EXPENSES

Salary - Clergy and Pastoral Staff	250,527.48
Salary - Lay Staff	460,290.55
Diocesan Apportionment	164,881.00
Overpayment 2024	(14,236.00)
Outreach Committee Fund	7,500.00
Building Insurance	106,000.00
WC Insurance	3,854.00
Repairs	53,000.00
Janitorial	7,000.00
Utilities	38,000.00
Accounting/Bank Charges	28,000.00
Giving Fees	6,000.00
Office	3,500.00
Postage	2,000.00
Telephone	2,000.00
Printing Expense	25,000.00
Stewardship	1,200.00
Kitchen Expense	1,500.00
Publicity/Website Maint.	500.00
Diocesan Convention	2,000.00
IT/Computer Expenses	12,000.00
Childrens Christian Education	4,000.00
Youth	1,000.00
Family Ministriy Supplies	3,500.00
Family Leaders	500.00
Adult Christian Education	1,666.67
EST Expense	1,666.67
Encounter	1,666.67
Safety & Security	20,000.00
Vestry	1,000.00
Worship Expense	5,000.00
Food	7,000.00
Sheet Music	3,000.00
Carillon	1,000.00
Childrens Choir	3,000.00
Hand Bells	1,000.00
Piano Maintensnce	1,500.00
Special Programs	

4th of July	300.00
Blessing @ the Zoo	300.00
Rally Day	300.00
Trunk or Treat	300.00
Parish Christmas Party	300.00
Total 1-5355-99 Special Programs	
Guest Speakers Contract	2,000.00
Total Expenses	1,220,517.04

2024

FOUNDATION REPORT



FOUNDATION REPORT 2024

Foundation Mission Statement:

Acknowledging that all that we are and have comes from God, our mission is to provide stewardship education, and to accumulate, manage, and distribute financial resources for the long-term benefits of the Church of the Heavenly Rest's ministries.

Foundation Objectives:

1. Provide a ready and acceptable means for the Church to receive major gifts, and to use those gifts for the greatest benefit to the mission of the church.
2. Provide a ready and steady source of income for Episcopal-sponsored charities and outreach programs.
3. Provide parish-wide program of stewardship education in estate planning and deferred giving.

Trustees:

The affairs of the Foundation are conducted by an independent Board of Trustees appointed by the Vestry. Five (5) Trustees serve staggered terms of five (5) years with the Senior Warden of the Vestry as the 6th Trustee. No Trustee shall serve more than 2 terms or 10 years in succession. Nonvoting members are the Rector and the Chancellor. Successor trustees are elected in December by the Vestry upon recommendation from the Foundation.

Thomas Choate, Chair, Yvonne Batts, Mike Denny, Paul Fulham, and Steve Strain served until the death of Steve Strain in 2024. Lee Hampton, who has served as an advisor to the Board of Trustees, was appointed to serve the remaining term (until December 31, 2028) as successor Trustee to Steve Strain.

Portfolio Performance

The investment portfolio asset value was \$5,263,956 at December 31, 2024, an increase of \$338,229 from the prior year, and with an annual return of 11.86% for 2024. The investment asset allocation was U.S. Equities 51%; International Equities 10%; Fixed Income 31%; Commodities 3%; and Cash 5%. Market conditions continued to improve in 2024.

The Trustees set the payout based on the returns annually. In 2024, a 4.50% payout was used; \$150,000 was budgeted for Outreach. The Outreach Budget is determined by the total amount of the spend rate less St. John's scholarships, other designated gifts, expenses, and a donor's annuity, resulting in the net amount designated for the Outreach dollars.

Ways to Support the Foundation

It is strongly encouraged that you discuss your gifts and estate plans with your attorney.

- Cash
 - Gifts in the amount of \$10,000 and above will establish an endowment fund. Your gift will be recognized immediately for the full amount of the gift, and all gifts are tax deductible. Checks should be made to the corporate name of Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest Foundation

- Appreciated Securities
 - Gifts of stocks, bonds, or mutual funds can be used to make gifts.
- Gifts from IRA
- Gifts of Life Insurance
- Wills and Estates
 - Bequests can be outright gifts of cash, a percentage of your estate, or a percentage of the remainder of your estate.

With regard to gifting and support of the Foundation, we are grateful and appreciative to a donor who, in 2024, made a donation in the amount of \$10,000 to establish a memorial for Steve Strain in September, 2024, and a donor that made a donation of \$40,000 in December, 2024, to establish a separate fund in the Foundation. These gifts of \$50,000 in the aggregate will be established as endowed funds, as are other funds in the Foundation.

If you would like to discuss including a gift in your estate plan to the Foundation, please contact Tom Choate at tomchoate@choatelawoffice.com or The Rev. David Romanik, Rector, at dromanik@heavenlyrestabilene.org.

2023-2024 CONDENSED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

December 31, 2024, and 2023	STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION	
ASSETS	2024	2023
Cash and cash equivalents	\$321,263	\$278,071
Marketable securities	5,041,196	4,688,046
Real Estate	148,999	148,999
Account receivable - Columbarium	258,536	260,386
Total Assets	<u>\$5,769,994</u>	<u>\$5,375,502</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Liabilities:		
Accounts payable	\$30,045	\$44,577
Annuities payable	71,439	76,430
Total Liabilities	<u>\$101,484</u>	<u>\$121,007</u>
Net Assets	5,668,510	5,254,495
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u>\$5,769,994</u>	<u>\$5,375,502</u>

FOUNDATION ENDWOMENT FUNDS

	ORIGINAL BEQUEST	BALANCE AS OF 12/31/2024	PURPOSE
RESTRICTED FUNDS			
BUILDING			
Philip H. Frohman Fund	100,000.00	158,465.00	Capital Improvments
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FUND			
Quasi Endowment designated by Vestry	988,135.00	404,851.00	Capital Improvements
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION			
Galloway Memorial Fund for Christian Ed.	19,645.19	131,421.00	Special Christian Education Programs
MUSIC			
Gerhart Music Fund	5,000.00	49,888.00	Special Music Programs
Boykin Choir Scholarship Fund	26,000.00	38,663.00	College Adult Choir Scholarship
Organ Expansion and Maintenance Fund	513,486.00	558,191.00	Organ Restoration, Expansion, Maintenance
OUTREACH			
Lucyle and Allen Heidebrecht Fund	21,613.05	33,232.00	Outreach Outreach Outreach
McKnight Outreach Fund	10,000.00	15,403.00	Support for La Familia de Gregory
Heavenly Rest Outreach Fund	7,725.00	10,518.00	
La Grande Familia de Gregory Fund	20,000.00	50,186.00	
SEMINARIANS			
Walker Seminary Fund	19,062.00	69,191.00	Help Seminary Students
SCHOLARSHIPS			
Rob Smart Merit Scholarship	19,520.70	89,684.00	St. John's Episcopal School - Highest GPA 5th Grade
Norwood-Likens Scholarship	10,000.00	32,126.00	St. John's Episcopal School - Financial Assistance
Carr P. Collins Scholarship	4,053.05	13,605.00	St. John's Episcopal School - Financial Assistance
Eric Otto Scholarship	11,775.00	38,106.00	St. John's Episcopal School - Financial Assistance
John and Dorothy Pope Scholarship	90,000.00	111,300.00	St. John's Episcopal School - Financial Assistance
Don Morris/Austin Denny Scholarship	129,700.00	173,887.00	St. John's Episcopal School - Financial Assistance
Dan Abbott Scholarship Fund	12,375.00	23,438.00	High School Senior - Heavenly Rest or St. Mark's
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS			
Thomas B. Aldrich Fund	61,107.23	86,362.00	
Rosalyn Skiles Awtry Fund	150,000.00	429,219.00	
Bold Trust B Fund	57,166.00	245,298.00	
Bailey & Helen Lewis Fund	311,504.00	891,361.00	
Charles Bacon Fund	100,000.00	110,929.00	
Harwell and Carolyn Barber Fund	105,956.00	131,854.00	
Grady and Ann Barr Fund	60,000.00	81,025.00	
Batjer/Kelley Fund	13,052.50	14,215.00	
Isabel Brock Fund	291,891.97	326,840.00	
Lucille Brumley Fund	150,000.00	204,060.00	
John and Nancy Estes Fund	60,000.00	74,665.00	
Morgan and Dodge Hubbard Fund	17,455.00	20,046.00	
Richard Johnson Fund	152,105.47	25,510.00	
Dixie and Lucille Rhodes Fund	219,333.00	707,006.00	
Wagstaff Fund	40,000.00	40,000.00	
Marcia Ungren Bailey Fund	10,000.00	10,000.00	
Steve Strain Memorial Fund	10,000.00	10,000.00	
Jack G. Woods Fund	200,000.00	228,693.00	

SENIOR WARDEN'S LETTER



Dear Heavenly Rest Family,

As Senior Warden, I have been honored to serve the Church of the Heavenly Rest this past year. I was deeply moved by our Stewardship Campaign, "Walk in Love," which truly reflects our church. I recently spoke with a new parishioner, and she remarked, "This church is the most welcoming community we have experienced in any city we've lived in." I am so proud to be part of a community that loves one another and upholds the teachings we learn every Sunday. This past year has allowed me to learn more about this wonderful community.


This year has presented its share of challenges, but we have faced each one with grace and fortitude. When I attend a church service, Wednesday night supper, EST, or any other church function, I can see the love and support that we all share for this wonderful home. I witness God at work in our spiritual journeys.

It has been a busy year filled with many changes. We experienced the departure of our beloved Associate Rector, Corrie Cabes, and have begun collaborating with a new bookkeeper, Donna Marcy, and a new accounting firm, Clergy Financial Resources. Despite these changes, this year was full of accomplishments. I am especially proud that Heavenly Rest hosted the Diocese of Northwest Texas Convention this year. It was a beautiful gathering of learning, prayer, and worship. We also hosted a wonderful "Tamasha la wa Afrika," a lovely Twelfth Night event with dinner, a Halloween trick-or-treat gathering, and many other activities.

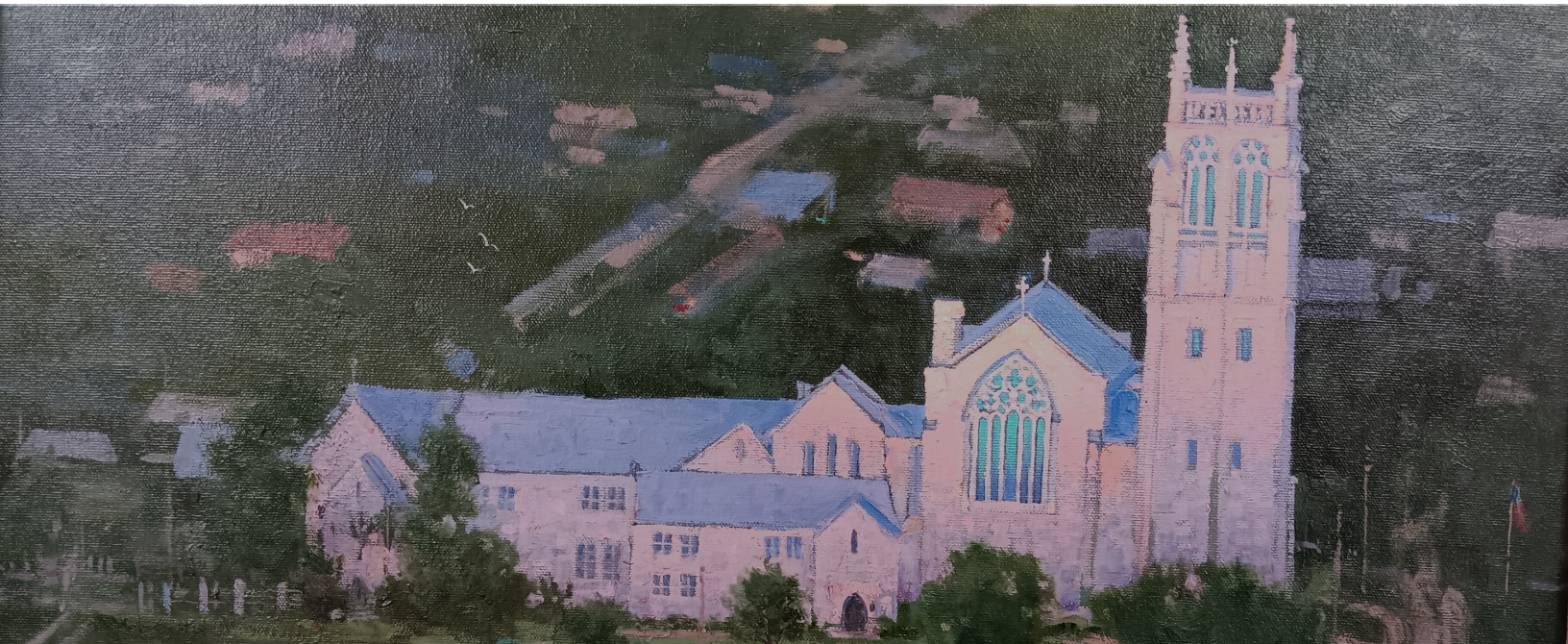
I want to express my appreciation to the clergy here at Heavenly Rest. I would especially like to thank David for his support, leadership, and guidance. He leads our church with kindness, thoughtfulness, and clear direction. Amanda brings joy and inclusivity to all members of our parish and the surrounding neighborhood. Thank you also to Karen, Doug, Bikole, and Russell.

I also want to thank the Vestry this year. I always look forward to our meetings and conversations and hearing every member's opinions. They are dedicated leaders who love our church and are committed to making the best decisions for its future. Lastly, I would like to thank all the volunteers at Heavenly Rest. I am continually amazed by your dedication to the ministries that make our church such a welcoming community, committed to walking in Jesus's way.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Haney", with a large, elegant flourish at the end.

Kate Haney
Senior Warden



JUNIOR WARDEN'S LETTER



It has been an honor and privilege to serve Heavenly Rest as Junior Warden this past year. I always get a chuckle from the title, as the term "Junior" is a bit of a misnomer. I can tell you from hard experience in my past two terms that there is definitely nothing "junior" about the responsibility of maintaining the buildings and grounds of the church. As your elected representative, I serve and report directly to you and like to think of the job as the "People's" warden. In this endeavor, I am ably assisted by the church staff, the Sextons, and members of the Vestry Buildings and Grounds Committee.

There were many repair projects during the year. These included items such as sprinkler repair, drain cleaning, parts replacement, expansion of Wi-Fi coverage, and electrical work, to name but a few. As to things you might actually notice, the wooden fence has been painted a nice sand color that has really brightened up the Pet Columbarium. There are new cross-vine plantings on trellises and hardy rosemary bushes in the Columbarium. As to major repairs in the Nave, the heating system was replaced with a reliable boiler, and a new A/C unit located in the basement has been ordered, with installation anticipated in the late spring. Note that the cost of the new A/C system was well in excess of \$100,000. Also, you may have noticed the new recycling bins on campus. As of January, Good Earth Recycling will be hauling off pew sheets, plastic, and office paper/waste in addition to recyclables from Gerhart such as glass and cans from the food prep.

Big project of the year was the renovation of the apartment behind the Hospitality House for use by the Sexton. This was a win-win endeavor – it provides for an on-site Sexton presence, allowed Robert to save money for a house of his own instead of paying exorbitant rent, and thirdly it provides for ground floor accessibility for our disabled guests in the future, as Hospitality House's rooms are upstairs and there is no elevator. Panic of the year was the abrupt cancellation of our property and liability insurance. Luckily, we were able to reengage a former insurer, Church Insurance Agency Corp, with no lapse in coverage at a very modest cost increase. It has been many years since there was an inventory and evaluation of the Church's belongings, and that effort is now underway. The other big news item is that the renovation of the organ is under contract to Kegg Pipe Organs in Ohio, and that actual construction in their shop has begun. The project is, amazingly, far ahead of schedule and we should hear the "new" organ for Christmas next year. I refer you to the latest Lay Reader for details on the project. The Building and Grounds Committee has been planning next year's projects, and we are focusing on landscaping enhancements and upgrading the quality of service for grounds upkeep and physical plant maintenance. Expect big changes to the north church (6th St) entrance area and the xeriscaping of the south-facing beds by Gerhart Hall. Also, expect rekeying of the campus and electronic access points to increase security and safety. And finally if you see me on campus and know of something that needs to be attended to, tell me, and I'll get it done!

H₃

Harry Hurt



A day in the life of the Junior Warden!



The new apartment behind Hospitality House

MINISTRY COMMITTEE REPORT

2024 was a full year for ministries of Heavenly Rest! Volunteers served both the Heavenly Rest and the Abilene communities in many ways. Service, after all, is at the heart of our Christian calling. "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received" (1 Peter 4:10). Service occurred in the forefront and behind the scenes. We have all been greeted by our friendly volunteer ushers, heard Scriptures read aloud by Lay Ministers, and seen the maturity of acolytes who serve in our Eucharistic services. But we may not always see the Altar Guild preparing the Nave and Sanctuary for worship, the stream team as they share our 10:30 services with the world, or even notice who is in the back of the Nave each Sunday to ensure microphones make everything audible.

Throughout the week, beyond our Sunday services, our parish's ministry continues. Prayers are offered for many by Daughters of the King. Parishioners in need receive prayer shawls and quilts. The Soup Sisters (and Misterys) deliver homemade soup to brighten the day of those in a dark spot. In 2024, more than 3000 bags of groceries were distributed to those who need them.

So many things are happening, there is not room here to describe them all. Thanks to Melody Brown, our Website Manager, wonderful descriptions of our more-than-40 active ministries are available on the Heavenly Rest website at heavenlyrestabilene.org/ministries for you to learn more, and find how you can serve with the gifts you have received.

David Christianson

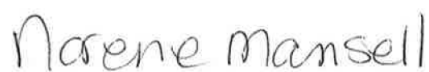
ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE REPORT

And another year has flown by! This is my second year serving on the Vestry, and I continue to learn how the gears of the church work. As has been said, the Vestry and its committees work behind the scenes. I continue to learn how the Vestry and committees work, all of which lead to providing assistance to the clergy and their team and a comfortable and warm atmosphere for our church family.

The Administration Committee has continued updating Gerhart Hall's operating policy. We reviewed the current policy we put in place for the opening of Gerhart. Then, we reviewed the policies of multiple community programs comparable to Gerhart's. Feedback has continued from clergy, sextons, and church administrators. Many others continued to share their views. The committee offered an initial draft followed by a revised draft. We are now reviewing a revised draft of the contract and rental prices with the clergy and the Senior Warden.

As I stated last year, it has been a year of learning as our committee members continue to revise and adapt drafts. It has also been another year of growth for all involved as we see each other striving to provide positive and sound work to complete this policy revision. We will soon move on to other assignments. The committee has put much effort into rough drafts, as its goal has been to help support the organizational structure required for sound parish operations.

I continue to learn and grow in my role as a Vestry member. I have learned much about the church and how many entities contribute to our work. Facing a new year is exciting and a bit daunting. I am excited to have more opportunities for learning and growth, but it is also daunting as we often "short-change" ourselves when presented with new, challenging tasks. I will continue to pray for the ability to learn and be a positive part of our Vestry.



Norene Mansell

THRIFT HOUSE REPORT

Parson Gerhart said, "Sell a man a shirt for a quarter; don't give it to him: that way he can maintain his dignity and pride." This was the beginning of the Thrift House ministry in 1952. Parson believed that Heavenly Rest should serve the community by providing assistance to the working poor.

The Thrift House is a very visible ministry in the Abilene community. It has been housed in the building at 761 Walnut since 1954. Clothing, shoes and household goods are available because of donations made by parish members and the community. The Thrift House also accepts items for consignment. Items for sale must be clean and in good repair.

Thrift House offers a welcoming atmosphere. Many relationships have developed over the years because customers know it is a safe, loving and welcoming community. The Thrift House is a wonderful example of Jesus's love for all. On average, fifty to seventy-five people walk through the doors each day. Each is welcomed with a "good morning" and "glad you are here." Every customer is treated with respect and love whether they purchase items or not. Many come by frequently for the friendly and warm atmosphere.

Funds raised by the Thrift House support Heavenly Rest Outreach, ECW (Episcopal Church Women) programs, Abilene ISD Homeless Project and Day Nursery of Abilene. One of ECW's programs is the support of Bowie Elementary Fourth Grade students.

The Thrift House has been managed very frugally over the last 72 years. It is a goal to do some updating to the building since it has not had a facelift in all those years. The Thrift House Board decided in the fall to donate a portion of their profit to other ministries in the church. This will be done at the next Board meeting.

Financials for 2024:

Sales \$64,544.67

Donation Sales \$70,240.43

Cash Offering \$1,115.05

Consignment Checks \$21,500.99

Expenses \$100,736.21

Net Income \$13,662.95

Thrift House Checking \$78,484.58

ECW Checking \$7,078.47

If you would like more information about the Thrift House and opportunities to help, please contact Shirlene Plochek at 325.672.3812.



St. John's

EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

OUR VISION

At St. John's Episcopal School, our mission is to inspire and nurture each child's unique potential in a caring, Christ-centered environment. We are dedicated to fostering a love of learning through a challenging and engaging curriculum, enriched by the arts, sciences, Spanish and physical education. St. John's teachers partner with families to cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and character, empowering students to become their best. Together, we strive to create a community where every child feels valued, inspired, and prepared for a lifetime of success.

AT A GLANCE

Enrollment: 182

Preschool (2 years old- PreK 4): 112

Elementary (Kinder - 5th grade): 70

Faculty and Staff: 58

Average Class Size: 12

Student-to-Teacher Ratio: 9:1

Tuition: Preschool (2 years old- PreK 4): \$6,000 (PT),
\$7,800 (FT) Elementary (Kinder- 5th grade): \$9,550



STJOHNSABILENE.ORG

1600 SHERMAN DRIVE / ABILENE, TEXAS 79605
325.695.8870



Texas Department of
Family and Protective Services



WHO WE ARE



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL in Abilene, Texas, has proudly served the community for over 70 years. St. John's was founded in 1952 as a mission of the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest and began with a single Kindergarten class. Since then, it has grown into a thriving institution with nearly 200 students. St. John's has remained committed to providing a rich, well-rounded education that helps boost every student's intellectual, physical, and spiritual health.

St. John's is proud of its tradition of **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**, with many alumni having earned distinctions such as valedictorian, salutatorian, and National Merit finalists. The school's rigorous academic program has also produced gifted scholars, musicians, and athletes, who become leaders in the community. The dedicated faculty and staff play an integral role in nurturing these achievements, providing guidance and support that empowers students to challenge themselves, build resilience, and develop independent thinking skills. In addition to core academics, St. John's provides enrichment programs in Music, Technology, Art, Spanish, P.E., STEM, Library, and Godly Play. This diverse curriculum ensures that students receive a comprehensive education that prepares them for future academic success while fostering creativity, critical thinking, and a lifelong love of learning.

A key aspect of life at St. John's is its strong **CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION**. Worship is central to the school's community, with weekly chapel services led by clergy from Heavenly Rest. Students also have the opportunity to serve as worship leaders, taking on roles as officiants, readers, and acolytes. These services provide a spiritual framework that encourages students to live by Episcopal principles of **COMPASSION, SERVICE, and INTEGRITY**. The school's commitment to Christian education guides students to develop a sense of purpose and responsibility as they learn to contribute meaningfully to the world around them.

PHYSICAL HEALTH & WELLNESS are also important parts of St. John's holistic approach to education. The school's campus includes a spacious air-conditioned gym, four well-designed playgrounds, a track for physical fitness, and a learning garden. These facilities support a wide range of activities aimed at promoting physical development and enjoyment of exercise and play.

Beyond academics and physical education, St. John's places a strong emphasis on building a vibrant, **SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY**. The school hosts a variety of events throughout the year, including Grandparents' Day, the Halloween Carnival, Leprechaun Laps, the Blessing of the Animals, and St. John's Sunday, which provide opportunities for students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni to come together in celebration. Regular celebrations of birthdays and other milestones further foster a sense of belonging and connection, creating a warm and inclusive environment where all are valued.



St. John's

EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

In October of 2024, members of the St. John's community, including current families, former parents, faculty and staff, donors, and members of Heavenly Rest, participated in a survey soliciting their impressions of the school. Respondents to the survey identified a number of strengths, as well as some opportunities for growth.



STRENGTHS

Among the aspects of life at St. John's that were most valued by survey respondents was the opportunity for students to experience religious formation. Many parents indicated that one of the primary reasons they sent their children to St. John's was because of the Christian environment. Participants in the survey were also very complimentary about the quality of the faculty and administrative staff, as well as the strength of the academic program. Many expressed appreciation for the small class sizes at St. John's. The survey also indicated an appreciation for the enrichments offered by the school, as well as an acknowledgment of the way that St. John's prepares students for leadership.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Despite the strength of our academic programs, the survey indicated some concern about teacher turnover. There were also responses about the need to develop strategies for increasing enrollment, particularly in the upper elementary grades. Several respondents reported that "it's hard to be new at St. John's," which outlines the need for more intentional communication about the school's culture to new staff and families. There was also a strong desire to develop a more fulsome approach to fundraising and institutional advancement, in order to help secure the long-term financial sustainability of the school. While many expressed appreciation for the Christian environment at St. John's, some were eager to see a greater emphasis on the school's Episcopal identity. There was significant enthusiasm for hiring a new Head of School, in part of the way that person might be able to address some of these challenges.

ST. JOHNS & HEAVENLY REST

We are eager to strengthen our connection with Heavenly Rest. We would love the opportunity to set up a bulletin board at CHR. Here we could display upcoming school events, student achievements, and community news to foster connection between church members and the School. We'd also love to provide the Church office with weekly information about St. John's to be included in the Church bulletin. In addition, we want to use *Swoop Stories* (the school's weekly newsletter), the school website, and social media to highlight church events, special services, or activities relevant to the school community. We intend to feature stories about the connection between the school and the church, such as joint community service projects or shared religious celebrations, and encourage school families to participate in church events and for church members to attend school functions. We would also love to explore having music, theological, and educational opportunities for SJES students at the church, allowing them to experience learning in a faith-based environment. St. John's would love explore opportunities for church members to volunteer as guest speakers or mentors in the classroom, sharing their expertise in various fields of study.

LOOKING AHEAD

After a period of significant discernment, the St. John's Board of Trustees voted to begin enrolling students for 6th Grade in the 2025-26 school year. This decision was made in response to considerable interest among members of the St. John's community, as well as an appraisal of the educational climate in the Abilene area. The plan is to consider the addition of 7th and 8th grades in subsequent school years. St. John's has been well-served by its physical plant since the 1980s, but the facility is beginning to show its age. While several renovations have taken place over the years, there is a need to develop a broader plan for renewal and expansion. The opening of our Smart Lab has demonstrated that technology is becoming an integral part of the classroom experience. Our facilities need to be improved in order to accommodate advancements in technology. With a 32-acre fenced-in campus, there is space for both new building projects and any temporary facilities that might be necessary during construction. As St. John's enters the next season of its life, it would benefit from intentional outreach to the community. Specific examples include the cultivation of the alumni network, the development of marketing strategies for the Abilene community, and the strengthening of the relationship between Heavenly Rest and the school.

CONCLUSION

The future is bright at St. John's. After more than 70 years of serving the Abilene community, we are poised to educate and form a new generation of leaders. With gratitude for the visionary leadership of our forebears, and with trust in God's grace, we are eager to begin the next season of our life together.



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL
FINANCIAL SUMMARY
as of DECEMBER 31, 2024

<u>CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS</u>		<u>CERTIFICATES OF DEPOSITS/TRUST FUNDS (INVESTMENTS)</u>			
FIRST FINANCIAL OPERATING	<u>\$241,770.37</u>	INVESTMENT:	<u>US TREASURY NOTES; VARIED LADDER</u>	MATURES:	<u>VARIED</u>
FIRST FINANCIAL PAYROLL CLRING	<u>\$0.00</u>	INTEREST RATE:	<u>VARIED</u>		\$535,610.25
FIRST FINANCIAL INTRIFI	<u>\$334,243.04</u>	C/D:	<u>FIELDPOINT PRIVATE BANK & TRUST</u>	MATURES:	<u>12/13/2024</u>
PETTY CASH	<u>\$500.00</u>	Interest rate:	<u>5.30%</u>		\$0.00
		C/D:	<u>FINANCIAL FEDERAL BANK</u>	MATURES:	<u>12/30/2024</u>
		Interest rate:	<u>5.50%</u>		\$0.00
		TRUST:	<u>FINANCIAL SQUARE TRUST GOVERNMENT FUND</u>		<u>\$815,274.41</u>
			<small>(MONEY MARKET)</small>		
TOTAL CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS:		<u>\$1,927,398.07</u>			

YTD BUDGET VS. ACTUAL
DOES NOT INCLUDE TEMP RESTRICTED GIFTS, EXPENSES FROM PR YR FUNDS OR EANS REV/EXP
as of DECEMBER 31, 2024

INCOME:	BUDGET	YTD ACTUAL	% OF BUDGET	EXPENSE:	BUDGET	YTD ACTUAL	% OF BUDGET
TUITION & REGISTRATION INCOME	\$1,572,750.00	\$1,348,238.99	86%	SALARIES	\$1,860,114.00	\$745,990.05	40%
OTHER PROGRAM FEES	\$42,750.00	\$24,135.75	56%	ADMINISTRATIVE	\$522,933.00	\$271,742.29	52%
LESS PROGRAM DISCOUNTS	(\$227,466.00)	(\$213,652.11)	94%	LESS:			
SPECIAL RELATED PROGRAMS	\$250,000.00	\$35,407.00	14%	PR YRS SET-A-SIDE		(\$54,393.38)	
OTHER THAN PROGRAM INCOME	\$516,958.00	\$141,217.97	27%	EDUCATION	\$97,500.00	\$95,052.18	97%
LESS:				BUILDING & GROUNDS	\$81,900.00	\$21,665.54	26%
TEMP RESTRICTED GIFTS		(\$11,441.74)		FUNDRAISING	\$0.00	\$ 11,791.62	0%
FUNDRAISERS	\$165,000.00	\$69,563.99	42%	LESS:		(\$2,197.19)	
(EXCLUDES ABILENE GIVES & RESTRICTED)		(\$5,608.58)		(EXCLUDES PY SET-A-SIDE, ABILENE GIVES & RESTRICTED)			
TOTAL INCOME	<u>\$2,319,992.00</u>	<u>\$1,387,861.27</u>	<u>60%</u>	FUNDS RELEASED/TEMP RESTICTED	\$500.00	\$500.00	100%
				TOTAL EXPENSE	<u>\$2,569,422.00</u>	<u>\$1,090,151.11</u>	<u>42%</u>
				DEPRECIATION EXPENSE @12/31	\$90,002.50		
				TOTAL NET W/DEPRECIATION	<u>\$207,707.66</u>		
				TOTAL NET W/O DEPRECIATION:	<u>\$297,710.16</u>		

NECROLOGY

Members of this community who died or were buried at Heavenly Rest in 2024

Anna Marie Holle

Jim Boykin

Barbradon Brooks

Martha Kiel

Pat Garren

Richard Hart

Jimmy Herman

Vincent Perini

Bud Ramsey

Annie Barker

Blanche Jerige

Eleice Garner

Jim Hilliard

Steve Strain

Sr. Mary Francis (Rebecca) Deulen

Linda Bratton

Jeff Newman

Suzanne Stowe

Father of all, we pray to you for those we love, but see no longer: Grant them your peace; let light perpetual shine upon them; and, in your loving wisdom and almighty power, work in them the good purpose of your perfect will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

2024 BY THE NUMBERS

23

23 people reaffirmed their commitment to Christ through Confirmation or Reaffirmation.

17

17 people were baptized into Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

18

18 people were buried from the church.

2

2 couples were joined in Holy Matrimony.

1

1 Ordination to the Sacred Order of Priests.

RECTOR'S REPORT

O God our Creator, you have divided our life into days and seasons, and called us to acknowledge your providence year after year: Accept your people who come to offer their praises, and, in your mercy, receive their prayers; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The theoretical physicist John Archibald Wheeler once mused, "time is nature's way of keeping everything from happening at once." The only way that we (or the universe, for that matter) can bear the weight of existence, in other words, is because of time. People of faith have intuited this insight for millenia. Just about every religious tradition has a calendar at its center. The only thing we know about some ancient religions is how they measured time. Indeed, one could argue that one of the primary functions of religion is to help us make sense of the time we have been given.

This is particularly true of the Christian tradition. Unlike some other religious traditions, the Church seeks to frame time not primarily in terms of seasons and obligations, but rather in relation to the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The first part of the liturgical year follows the earthly life and ministry of Jesus: birth, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. The second part of the year invites us to reflect on what it means for us that the creator became part of creation: that the eternal has intersected with the temporal. The Church's calendar, in other words, reminds us that immortality pervades our mortal lives, and that time is a gift from God.

We have arrived at that moment in the parish calendar that invites us to reflect on the year that is past and look forward to the year that is about to unfold. As I have mentioned elsewhere, I was grateful to turn the page on 2024. This parish community had to navigate unprecedented challenges, many of which occurred within a very short period of time. Indeed, there were several moments throughout

the year when everything seemed to be happening at once. In the midst of these challenges, however, the Church did what it does best: providing stability in the face of uncertainty, comfort in the face of sorrow, and the conviction that even the difficult times are imbued with immortality.

Normally, I would begin this report with a review of all the wonderful things that happened at Heavenly Rest this past year. Make no mistake: many wonderful things happened in the life of this community in 2024. I would be remiss, however, if I didn't acknowledge that we have endured some difficult moments over these last months. Nevertheless, as I have reflected on this period, which was one of the most difficult of my priesthood, I have found myself giving thanks for the people of deep faith, talent, and dedication who are part of this parish.

July saw the departure of the Reverend Corrie Cabes, who served as our Associate Rector for almost three years. Corrie is a singularly talented priest, one who is passionate about the work of pastoral care and who was the staff's "encourager in chief." Corrie was particularly enthusiastic about Exploring Spiritual Treasure, our program for people who are new to the parish or interested in deepening their faith, and she has already brought a version of EST to her current context in Alabama. We knew it would be hard to find her successor, and that has turned out to be more true than we could have imagined. After pausing the search for a few months, I have had some productive conversations with a very promising candidate, and I hope to bring them for a visit in the coming months. In the meantime, I have to express my deep thanks and appreciation to the Reverend Amanda Watson and the Reverend Karen Boyd, who joyfully embraced many of Corrie's Christian Formation responsibilities. Amanda and Karen are gifts to this parish, and it is hard to imagine this place without them.

At the beginning of August, Thrift House was broken into in the middle of the night. While nothing was stolen, it was yet another traumatic moment in a tumultuous year. Shirlene Plocheck, parishioner and Thrift House manager, was on the scene almost immediately, and stayed with the shop until it was secured. The willingness of people like Shirlene to go above and beyond is one of the reasons we

were able to navigate this past year.

In what turned out to be one of the more consequential events of 2024, we bid farewell to LeighAnna Morris, who served as our Parish Accountant for several years. In an effort to mitigate the effects of future turnover in the Accounting Department at Heavenly Rest, we decided to hire a part time Bookkeeper and outsource some of our financial reporting work to a company that specializes in church accounting. Unfortunately, that transition proved to be rocky for a number of reasons, which meant that we were flying somewhat blind for much of the year when it came to financial reporting. When we finally had numbers for 2024, the deficit exceeded even what we had budgeted. Fortunately, we were able to address this overspend with reserves, but it is clear that there is a need to pay closer attention to our expenses going forward.

Along those lines, our Stewardship Campaign this year made it clear that we have some work to do on the revenue side of things as well. It is worth highlighting some of the accomplishments of this campaign. We received a significant number of new pledges, including more than a few from members of the 1:00 congregation. We have been working for several years to increase engagement in that community, and I am grateful to see that has borne fruit. Our "Youth Stewardship Challenge," in which we invited younger members of the parish to make a pledge and have it matched by another parishioner, was a success, especially in light of the fact that this was the first year. I am hopeful that we are planting the seeds of generosity for the younger members of this parish. Our Stewardship co-chairs, Sarah Ferguson and Rick Willis, spearheaded these efforts with creativity and drive, and they deserve our deep appreciation and gratitude. By the time we reached the end of the year, we received \$1,030,000 in pledges, which is a testament to the generosity of the people in this parish.

Even with this amount, however, we were looking at a deficit of almost \$90,000, which is obviously unsustainable. In response, the Vestry discussed two versions of the budget: one of which included the salary for an Associate Rector, and one of which did not. The unanimous consensus of the Vestry was that a place of this size

and dynamism needs an Associate Rector. Several parishioners have generously agreed to increase their pledges for this year to help close the deficit, and I am pleased to report that we are presenting a 2025 budget with funding for an Associate Rector, and a deficit of less than 1%. Clearly, this is not something we are going to be able to do every year, and we need to explore ways to increase our revenue. While we will certainly look at some creative possibilities, the most important component of this is stewardship. The fact remains that there are people in this parish who participate regularly in the life of the community who do not pledge. I know everyone is dealing with strained budgets, but as I have said before, the amount is less important than the fact that one pledges. If you consider yourself to be a member of this parish community, part of the expression of that is a financial commitment to this place.

I am also aware that one of the other formative events of the year was the death of our friend, Steve Strain. Steve was Senior Warden when I arrived in 2019, and had worked with three previous rectors. Few people loved this place the way Steve did. He was a constant cheerleader for the good that Heavenly Rest could do in the community. In fact, Steve told me on multiple occasions that serving as Senior Warden at Heavenly Rest was one of the most rewarding things he had ever done. In many ways, his death has left a hole in this parish and in the lives of many who are part of this community. Yet, I can't help but think about the joy with which Steve approached his participation in the life of this parish. Steve understood that Heavenly Rest is a place where God is doing more for us than we can ask or imagine. As heartbroken as I was to say goodbye to Steve, I was also grateful for his example of hope in the face of difficulty.

In many ways, this tension is characteristic of life in the Church. One of the things that is both challenging and comforting about our common life is that moments of sorrow are often intertwined with moments of profound joy. As challenging as 2024 was, there were many bright spots and opportunities for celebration. Just after last year's Annual Meeting, Bishop Mayer confirmed or received 23 people into the life of Heavenly Rest. Looking at the names of those who were confirmed, all of them are actively involved in the life of the community.

Over the course of the year, we baptized 17 people into Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. The Reverend Karen Boyd was ordained to the priesthood on Holy Cross Day, beginning a new phase of her ministry in this parish and in the wider Church.

This Fall, Thom Pavlechko, our Organist and Director of Music, began a Choristers program for older elementary students. There are currently about 10 choristers, and they sing regularly in worship with the Adult Choir, which has also grown to include almost 20 people on a weekly basis. As Thom has pointed out, it will not be too long before the choir outgrows the chancel. The Children's Choir also continues to meet weekly and offer music in worship when possible.

The new school year also saw the arrival of our Interim Head of School at St. John's Episcopal School. Katie Rose Gloyna not only brings wonderful academic and administrative experience to St. John's, but also a passion for continuing to develop the connection between church and school. In October, the Board of Trustees at St. John's decided to add sixth grade for the 2025-26 school year. This decision was an act of faith, but the Board believes this expansion will meet an expressed need in the Abilene community.

Also in October, Heavenly Rest hosted the 66th Convention of the Diocese of Northwest Texas. Over the course of several days, over 150 clergy and delegates from throughout the region descended on Abilene to worship, conduct business, share fellowship, and enjoy some wonderful food. Of course, Heavenly Rest rolled out the red carpet, and I heard from numerous people around the Diocese, including our Bishop, expressing their appreciation for this parish's gracious hospitality. Dozens of parishioners and staff were involved in making this event possible, but a special word of gratitude goes to Yvonne Batts and Judy Godfrey, who coordinated the festivities and kept many plates spinning. Few parishes embrace the sacred vocation of hospitality better than Heavenly Rest, and this past year's Diocesan Convention was no exception.

Many of the other highlights at Heavenly Rest were those things that have become

part of the regular rhythm of life at this extraordinary parish: regular combined services in English and Swahili, a beautiful Holy Week, St. Francis at the Zoo, Tamasha la wa Afrika, and Twelfth Night, to name just a few. This is a place where people come to celebrate what God has done and is doing in their lives: in moments of joy and sorrow, in moments of stability and uncertainty, in moments when everything seems to be happening at once.

As I have mentioned several times before, one of my habits is to park in the far southern corner of the parking lot just off of South 7th Street. I do this for several reasons, but the main reason is that it allows me to open the gate, walk across the Courtyard, look up at the bell tower, and marvel that this is my job, that I get to serve this place as your rector. In all the tumult of 2024, this daily ritual has reminded me how blessed I am to be a part of this community, how grateful I am for the opportunity to serve here, and what a gift my time at Heavenly Rest has been and will continue to be.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David F. Romanik". The signature is written in a cursive style with a plus sign at the end.

David F. Romanik

January 30, 2025

COMMISSIONING OF VESTRY, DELEGATES, AND PARISH OFFICERS

Rector:

The gifts of the Lord were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ.

V. Declare his glory among the nations

And his wonders among the people:

R. Tell it out among the nations:

"The Lord is King"

Let us pray:

Have regard to our supplication, O gracious Lord, and confirm with your heavenly benediction your servants commissioned to minister in your Church, that with sincere devotion of mind and body they may offer acceptable service to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the Name of God and of this congregation I commission you as Officers and Leaders in this Parish.

Let us pray:

O Lord, without whom our labor is lost: We beseech you to prosper all works in your Church undertaken according to your holy will. Grant to your workers a pure intention, a patient faith, sufficient success on earth, and the blessedness of serving you in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction

CLERGY AND STAFF

The Reverend David F. Romanik, Rector
The Reverend Amanda Watson, Assistant Rector for Community Life
The Reverend Karen Boyd, Assisting Priest
The Reverend Dr. Doug Thomas, Priest in Residence
The Reverend Dr. Russell Dickerson, Deacon
Bikole Mulanda, Swahili Minister
Thomas Pavlechko, Organist and Director of Music
Shelly Reed, Music Assistant, Choristers
Laura Dickson, Music Assistant, Children's Choir
Carol Ann Weston, Director of Children & Family Ministries
Luke Mendez, Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries
Luke Teten, Verger
Steve Gibbs, Parish Coordinator
Donna Marcy, Parish Bookkeeper
Melody Brown, Website Manager
Austin Hackel, Communications Coordinator
Robert Becerra, Sexton
Brandon Martin, Assistant Sexton
Dorothy Guerra, Housekeeper
Anne Jones, Nursery Manager

