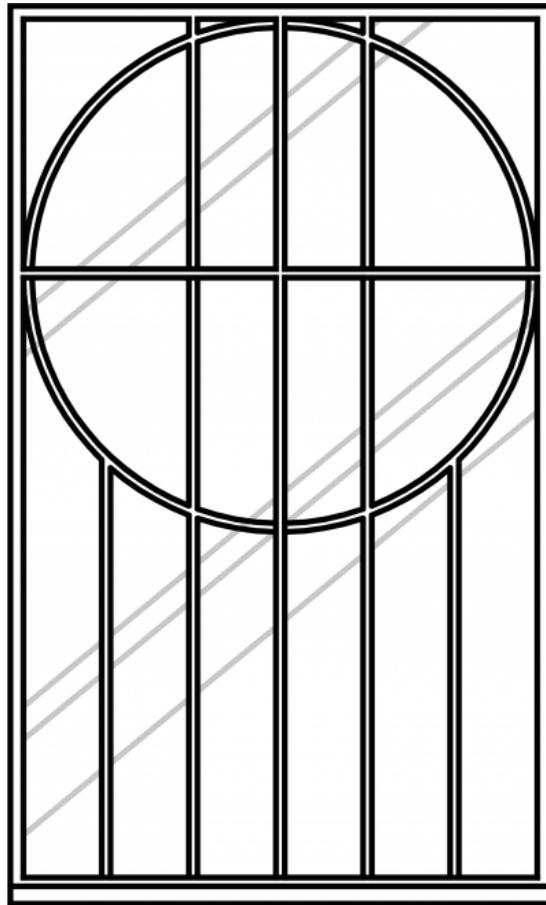


Saint Matthew's

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

2025 Annual Report



Annual Parish Meeting

February 8th, 2026

11:30am

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Agenda, Minutes and Leadership

- Annual Meeting Agenda (2)
- Report from Nominating Committee 2024 (4)
- Annual Parish Meeting 2024 Minutes (5)
- Committee Chairs of St. Matthew's 2024 (12)
- Church Staff + Statistics (13)

Clergy, Wardens and Staff Reports

- Rector (14)
- Wardens, Pam Ely & Anne Newton (16)
- Recognitions (17)
- Director of Music Ministries and Organist (19)
- Assistant to the Rector for Formation and Engagement (21)

Committee Reports

- Altar Guild and Flower Committee (23)
- Cemetery (24)
- Liturgical Assistants (25)
- Nursery Care (25)
- Endowment Investment Committee (26)
- Education for Ministry (27)
- Social Justice (28)
- WEPCO (29)
- Finance Report 2024, 2025 Projections (31-33)
- Balance Sheet (34)

Annual Meeting Agenda
February 8, 2026
11:30 am

Call to Order	The Rev. John Branson, Interim Rector
Opening Prayer	The Rev. John Branson, Interim Rector
Approval of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting Minutes	Anne Newton, Warden
Remarks by the Assistant to the Rector for Formation and Engagement	The Rev. Dr. Tommy Watson
Remarks from the Director of Music Ministries	Irina Georgieva
Remarks by the Wardens	Pam Ely & Anne Newton, Wardens
Nominating Committee Report	Anne Newton, Warden
Motion to approve slate of Election of Vestry, Officers, and Delegates	The Rev. John Branson, Interim Rector
Recognitions	The Rev. John Branson, Interim Rector
Update from the “What’s Next Committee”	John Pearson
Solar Energy Project Update	Bob Giolitto
Recap of Stewardship Realty presentation	Bob Giolitto, Brian Angerame
2025 Financial Review & 2026 Budget	Rob Kyle, Treasurer
Questions and Answers	
Recap 2025 Slideshow	Kate DeAngelis
Closing Prayer	The Rev. John Branson, Interim Rector
Adjournment of Annual Meeting	The Rev. John Branson, Interim Rector

2026 Wardens, Vestry and Officers

Warden	Pam Ely
Warden	Keith DeAngelis
Treasurer	Rob Kyle
Assistant Treasurer	Brian Angerame
Clerk	Jennifer DeAngelis
Diocesan Delegates	Pam Ely, Sharon Ely Pearson
Diocesan Alternates	Chris Perry, Steve Hudspeth

Vestry Class of 2027

John Pearson
Eleanor Arnold (one year term)
Endy Perry (one year term)

Vestry Class of 2028

Brian Angerame
Bob Giolitto

Vestry Class of 2029

Becky Hudspeth

WEPCO Board Members: Pam Ely & Chris Perry

**The Nominating Committee Report
2026 Slate**

Warden	Pam Ely
Warden	Keith DeAngelis
Treasurer	Rob Kyle
Assistant Treasurer	Brian Angerame
Clerk	Jennifer DeAngelis
Diocesan Delegates	Sharon Ely Pearson, Pam Ely
Diocesan Alternates	Chris Perry, Steve Hudspeth
WEPCO Board Members	Pam Ely, Chris Perry

Vestry

Eleanor Arnold to serve one more term

Endy Perry to serve one more term

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
2024 Annual Parish Meeting Minutes
February 23, 2025
11:30am

Call to Order: Anne Newton, Warden, called the meeting to order at 11:30

Attendance: The meeting was held in person and virtually via Facebook Live

Opening Prayer: John Branson

Reflection: John Branson

A quote from Jaber Crow, by Wendell Barry

Approval of Annual Parish Meeting Minutes: Anne Newton

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2024 Annual Parish Meeting. Motion was seconded, and approved unanimously by the parishioners in attendance

Remarks from the Assistant to the Rector for Formation and Engagement: The Rev. Dr. Tommy Watson

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 21. Highlights include:

- He arrived at St. Matthew's in August
- On Sunday mornings when he is not in church, he is teaching Church School with clergy from WPC
 - o In today's class, the theme was being kind to others
 - A student said that even when others aren't kind to us, we need to be kind to them
 - Tommy was encouraged by that
- We are short of volunteers
 - o Don't want to overburden those already helping
 - o So if you are interested, speak with Tommy
- In the fall, Tommy got to see some of our youth outside of church
 - o In a concert
- Tommy is meeting others in the community
 - o Youth and others
- This spring, there will be lots to do
 - o Youth will make cookies for those at home
 - o Confirmands/Youth will visit a synagogue
- A question was asked: Other than helping teach on Sundays, what do you need from us?
 - o Answer: just volunteering
 - Even if it is just one time
 - All the materials and the lesson plan are provided
 - Tommy would be happy to meet you beforehand
- A question was asked: Are we doing Church School and Youth events with WPC?
 - o Answer: Church School is with WPC
 - Today there were six children – Five from St. Matthew's and one from WPC

Remarks from the Director of Music Ministries:

Irina Georgieva

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 19. Highlights include:

- She has written a long report
 - o It is full of details
- She started in August
- A highlight is the choir
- We have a strong and lovely choir
- She highlighted the anthems
 - o Some spirituals
 - The congregation seems to like
 - o Some classical
- She has started using Lift Every Voice and Sing (LEVAS)
- Extra music services
 - o Taizé service in the fall
 - o Will do more in Lent
 - o Compline services during Lent
 - On Tuesdays in Lent via Zoom
 - o Will have a choral concert at the end of the year
 - o Will have a collaborative concert with WPC
- There was a children's event on February 1
 - o In combination with WPC
 - o Six children built a pipe organ
 - o It was a 3-hour event
 - o A great success
 - o It was part of The Arts at St. Matthew's
 - o Another event is an Artist event
 - His home is his gallery
 - We will visit him, and he will tell us about his art
 - o The Arts at St. Matthew's was expanded to not just music this season
 - o There will be more musical The Arts at St. Matthew's events in the fall
- A question was asked: Could she post the postlude in the bulletin?
 - o Answer: Yes
- A comment: Today's offertory was beautiful, and it is beautiful every week

Remarks by the Wardens:

Pam Ely

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 17. Highlights include:

- Last week, the Bishop talked about telling our story
 - o We have helped a lot of agencies
 - o We have helped a lot of people
 - o We have buried
 - o We are loyal
 - o We are a faithful community
- We are facing a challenge
 - o Our resources are diminishing
- We have options
- But whatever we do, we need to solve it together

- We need to pull together and figure it out together
- We need to be looking for ways to come together
- We need to be looking for ways to help each other
- We need to be looking for ways to help us grow
- Please come to the All-Parish Meeting on March 16

Nominating Committee Report:

Pam Ely

The following slate of Officers and Vestry members was submitted for consideration – Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 4:

Officers:

Warden	Pam Ely
Warden	Anne Newton
Treasurer	Rob Kyle
Assistant Treasurer	Brian Angerame
Clerk	Jennifer DeAngelis
Diocesan Delegates	Pam Ely and Sharon Pearson
Diocesan Alternates	Chris Perry and Stephen Hudspeth
WEPCO Board Members	Pam Ely and Chris Perry

New Vestry Members:

- Beth Baker to serve one more term
- Brian Angerame to serve a three-year term
- Bob Giolitto to serve a three-year term

Election of Vestry, Officers, and Delegates:

Pam Ely

A motion was made to approve the slate as presented. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously by all parishioners in attendance.

- A question was asked: How are there three members in one year’s class and only one member in another year’s class? How will that affect the Vestry moving forward?
 - o Answer: The volunteer base has fluctuated over the last several years
 - o If anyone is interested, let us know
 - o We are running out of people to ask
 - You should ask those who you might not be sure about their answer
 - o Next year when three people cycle off, maybe ask one to serve another year
- A question was asked: How does the search process work
 - o Answer: There is a recording of the Bishop’s time with us from last week that explains the search process
 - It can be emailed to everyone

Recognitions:

Pam Ely

- Vytas was thanked for all his service and all that he brings
 - o He has served on the Vestry for four years
 - o He is a faithful parishioner
 - o He is a good soldier.

- He is a good guy
- Amy has served on the Vestry for three years
 - She has helped with the pageant
 - She has done many coffee hours
 - She always says “yes”

2024 Financial Review and 2025 Budget:

Rob Kyle

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 34. Several slides were presented with information on the financials. Highlights include:

- Last Friday Rob had a root canal and this will be easier!
- First, we will review 2024 and then talk about 2025
- 2024:
 - Income was \$389K
 - Expenses were \$607K
 - Operating loss was (\$217K)
 - Carried over \$59K from 2023
 - Endowment draw of \$163K
 - Forecasted loss of \$217K
 - Mission was \$12K
 - \$27K we paid to Mortgage Principal
 - \$10K we paid on capital
 - All the above meets to a \$7K cash deficit
 - Then Andrew left
 - We decided to take a risk on hiring Tommy
- Gave Parish Update on May 9, 2024
 - New budgeted Operating Loss of \$297K
 - How to fund:
 - 2023 Cash Surplus \$59K
 - 2024 Endowment Distribution \$163K
 - Mission (\$12K)
 - Total Unfunded Deficit of (\$87K)
- How we actually did in 2024
 - Actual income of \$389K, same as budget
 - Pledge receipts \$3K lower
 - Other donations \$4.5K lower
 - Plate donations \$2K up
 - Auction \$5K up
 - Expenses totaled \$617K, \$10K more than budget
 - Christian Education (\$34K) since we didn't hire a director
 - Clergy expense +\$59K reflecting our hiring of Tommy
 - Music expense +7.4K mostly due to section leaders
 - Plant (\$25K) – maintenance +\$1.5K + insurance (\$7K) + Utilities (\$3K) + WEPCO (\$17K)
 - Still benefiting from Burns Contract
 - Operating loss of (\$227K), \$10.6K worse than budget
 - How to fund the (\$227K) loss
 - \$59K 2023 cash surplus
 - \$163K 2024 Endowment Distribution
 - \$50K additional Endowment Distribution – on recommendation of Finance Committee to help fund 4th quarter if needed

- (\$2K) mission – had budgeted \$12K
 - All totaled to a \$42K surplus
 - Will roll that over to 2025
- Restricted Funds
 - Rob offered brief commentary on Restricted Funds as they stood at end of 2024
 - Chris Perry offered brief historical context on the Capital Fund
 - Noting that 7 years ago, the capital reserve fund totaled approximately \$250K, and has since grown larger with distributions from the endowment
 - Distributions from endowment are now being used to fund operating costs so the capital reserve fund is declining as we use funds to pay for capital expenses and mortgage principal
 - A question was asked: Will Burns still pave the driveway/parking lot?
 - Answer: Yes. We have the Burns contract through May of 2026
 - Ian Harleman Memorial Fund
 - To memorialize Ian – he died in a car accident
 - His Dad died last year
 - It is dedicated to music education
 - We are trying to work with his mother but so far have not been able to find something
 - His mom is more open to a mission event
- 2025 Plan and Budget
 - Total income of \$399K
 - Total expense of \$621K
 - Net Operating Income of (\$222K)
 - 2025 Budget: Income
 - Budget income is \$10K more than 2024 actual
 - 43 pledging families – down from last year
 - Non-pledge donations down
 - Auction budget is a conservative number
 - Other income – we received \$27.5K Employee Retention Tax Credit
 - For keeping people employed during Covid
 - 2025 Budget: Operating Expenses
 - Christian Ed (\$1.3K)
 - Clergy (\$27K) – much of the savings from Marissa’s departure is offset by Supply Clergy expenses
 - Common Mission is more
 - Fellowship is more
 - We want people to come
 - Music is more
 - We all love what Irina is doing
 - Plant \$19K more than 2024
 - A WEPCO rebate
 - Compensation increases
 - We paid \$4K to Circle of Care and \$4K to Open Door when we got the rebate from the IRS
 - We have hands-on things to do with Mission partners throughout the year
 - Will spend \$2K to RAH in October
 - Have dedicated \$5K for the Rector search

- 2025 Endowment
 - Value at 12/31/24: \$4.7M, up from \$4.4M at 12/31/23
 - 2025 Endowment Distribution is \$165K
 - Expected allocations:
 - Mission \$10K
 - Capital \$0
 - Operating Expenses \$155K
- 2025 Budget Capital Expense
 - To be funded with the Capital Reserve Fund (12/31/34 balance: \$93K)
 - \$29.3K Mortgage Principal
 - \$25K WEPCO Capital Contribution
 - \$15K more due to bathroom renovation
- 2025 Budget Cash Resources
 - 2024 Cash surplus of \$42K
 - 2025 Endowment Distribution of \$165K
 - 2025 Operating Loss (Budgeted) of (\$222K)
 - Mission (\$10K)
 - All totaled to a cash surplus (unfunded deficit) of (\$25K)
- A brief historical context of the Endowment Fund was offered
 - The Endowment Fund was created in 1986
 - With the approval of the Diocese
 - For the purpose of Mission work and to take care of the building, Rectory
 - Times have changed
 - A decision was made and now it supports our Operating budget
 - And a 4% draw
 - And an additional \$50K
 - We need to protect the Endowment Fund
 - It is easy to say and to take more and more from the Endowment Fund as we have challenges
 - So advocating to let the Endowment Fund grow and to find other ways to fund our Operating budget
 - Rob commented that he and the Finance Committee would like not to use the Endowment Fund for funding the budget
- A comment was made: Thank you to Rob, Pam, Anne, Chris, Keith, the Finance Committee and other committees. Hearing of a \$222K deficit is scary but we always find ways to make it work. There is much hope. Thank you to those carrying us through the dark times. Many many thanks.
- A question was asked: An approximation on the depreciating cost on the Rectory?
 - Answer: Real estate is not on the balance sheet. Organ is not on the balance sheet. But it is a four-bedroom house. 2016-2017 we spent a lot on it. It needs more work.
- A question was asked: Since we are using Tommy for Youth, can we put some of Tommy's expenses in the Youth lines? In looking at the Pie Chart slide, what does it say about us with the clergy section being so big and the Christian Ed section being so small. It makes our commitment to Youth look small.
 - Answer: Rob doesn't think so
- A question was asked: What if we sold the Rectory and had different housing for the Rector, an apartment or something smaller?
 - Answer: Marissa told the Vestry that the Rectory is a good asset and not to sell it. A nice house is a good draw to a candidate, especially in pricey Fairfield County
- A question was asked: Is there a limit to what we can take from the Endowment?
 - Answer: We cannot spend more than 25% in three years in a row, or the Diocese can take it over. The Endowment Fund belongs to the church, it is not ours

- A comment was made: We need to shift our thinking – the Endowment Fund, the Rectory, the church are not ours. We are managing assets owned by the Diocese of Connecticut. We are stewards of extraordinary properties for God’s sake. A way to look at our lives, with Christ at the center. They are grateful to each and every one of us for our service and sacrifice. We operate with faith, love, and hardship
- A question was asked: Can you compare your church (John’s church) in Westport to ours (St. Matthew’s)?
 - o Answer: Westport has an endowment as well. They were using all its interest and \$200K of it to balance books. That was some time ago but that is lived out by many churches. We changed by the grace of God and people pledged more, people spent more time there, there were more activities, there was new energy and a new spirit
- A comment was made: Ideas out of the blue and open hearts will empower St. Matthew’s. It will happen. We have been in dark times in the past. We have been in good times in the past. We will be in good times again.
- A comment was made: We will have an opportunity, multiple opportunities, as we move forward with the search process. On March 16, we will start to talk about what our dreams are. The finances still need to go to the Diocese so we can see what we are looking for. We will start to build what our dreams and goals are
- A comment was made: Other churches who have dipped into endowment funds have closed because of it
- Many thank you’s were given by Rob – to Keith, Chris, Brian, Steve, Pam, Anne, and the Finance Committee

Closing Prayer:

John Branson

Adjournment of Annual Meeting:

Anne Newton

Meeting was adjourned at 1:00.

Minutes recorded and respectfully submitted by Jennifer DeAngelis, Vestry Clerk

2025 St. Matthew's Committee Chairs

Acolytes, Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors & Intercessors
Altar Guild
Cemetery Committee
Education for Ministry
Endowment Development Committee
Endowment Investment Committee
Finance
Flower Guild
Ushers
Memorial Gifts
Mission
Pastoral Care
Social Justice
WEPCO

Sharon Ely Pearson
Betsy Pettit
Dodo Roberts, Paul Reis
Sharon Ely Pearson
Roger Valkenburgh
Chris Perry, Bob Dalldorf
Rob Kyle, Brian Angerame
Jennifer Angerame
David Gortz
Clergy & Wardens, ex officio
Pam Ely
Elizabeth Baker, Pam Ely
Eleanor Arnold, Bob Giolitto
Pam Ely, Chris Perry

St. Matthew's is a busy place with lots of moving parts. We couldn't do all that we do without these dedicated teams. We're so grateful to everyone who serves on a committee, as Chairs, and Co-Chairs. Thank you for your service to God and to St. Matthew's. Your faithfulness and dedication make an important difference in the life of our whole community. Thank you!



Church Staff 2025

Interim Rector
 Assistant to the Rector for Formation & Engagement
 Director of Music Ministries and Organist
 Parish Administrator
 Virtual Communications Coordinator
 Bookkeeper
 Director of WEPCO
 Sexton
 Nursery Staff

The Rev. John H. Branson
 The Rev. Tommy Watson
 Irina Georgieva
 Nancy Johnson
 Matthew Henshaw
 Louann Miska
 Donna Savage
 Alix Williams, Jairo Mejia
 Lucia Sato

Statistics

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Sunday Services	52	53	55	55	63	62	100	108	103	94
Weekday Services	15	8	11	17	43	81	30	37	36	37
Pastoral Visits (priest)	12	21	21	31	42	34	20	21		
Eucharistic Visits (lay)	9	2	5	6	4	3	6			
Total Sunday attendance	2,626	2,721	2,909	3,439	1,894		7,897	8,560	9,714	10,386
Baptisms	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	6	9
Confirmations	1	5	1	16	10	0	23	23	23	12
Marriages	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	1
Funerals/Burials	1	1	3	3	1	5	5	6	5	3
Avg. Sunday Attendance	51	52	56	66			135	164	134	171

Baptisms
 Andrew Logan Lattimer

Funerals/Burials
 Barbara B. Crutchley

Confirmation
 Douglas Gubner

Interim Rector's Report 2025

The Challenge

Dramatic change, such as when a church unexpectedly learns that their rector will be leaving to take a new position is a disruptive and bewildering experience for a congregation. When **Marissa Rohrbach** announced her resignation on the second day of 2025--after a seven-year tenure at St. Matthew's--the news raced through St. Matthew's like an electric shock. Gathering themselves, members of the congregation came together to offer their appreciation and love for Marissa and her family with a grand farewell on February 2nd.

Even as the year of 2025 began with such a surprise, the Wardens and Vestry of Matthew's--wrestling with dynamics/concerns beyond the daily scope of members of the parish--were confronted with had a host of issues. Specifically, they had to address leadership of worship, compliance with expectations of the Diocese, proper guidance and support of the staff, and as well a variety of programmatic and financial concerns. So often the Church proports to support the ministry of the laity—the ministry and sacrificial service of the lay members of a congregation. 2025 was truly a time of impressive and dynamic leadership by the lay leaders and members of St. Matthew's.

The Staff

In August of 2024, two new, fulltime members of the staff—The Rev. Dr. **Tommy Watson**, Assistant for Formation and Engagement, and **Irina Georgieva**, Director of Music Ministries were hired by Marissa. Without the presence of a full-time rector in 2025, both had to “make their way” listening attentively to and attending to the still-forming expectations of the congregation. Both Tommy and Irina, with considerable experience and training, stepped up significantly to fulfill and allay the many expectations, anxieties, and aspirations at St. Matthew's. To them both, we owe our great gratitude for their willingness to *bear all things, hope all things, and endure much* for the sake of the wider community and congregation of St. Matthew's. They have ministered wonderfully and faithfully in unusual circumstances to this congregation.

So, too, other members of the staff of St. Matthew's have responded to this “in-between time” with polish and patience. **Nancy Johnson**, Parish Administrator; **Donna Savage**, Director of the facilities of WEPCO; **Louann Miska**, Bookkeeper; **Matthew Henshaw**, Technology Coordinator; **Lucia Sato**, Head of the Nursery; and **Alix Williams** and **Jairo Mejia**, sextons have in their own ways steadied the ship. Each, and together, they have wonderfully “filled in”, standing strong, taking up the “slack”, carrying forward the ministry and programs of St. Matthew's. In any given year, the staff of a church working quietly and faithfully, deserve the hearty thanks and praise of the congregation. This unusual year at St. Matthew's, we are especially grateful for the staff's “over and above” efforts, as well as their creative and steady service.

Lay Leadership

And like the staff, the lay Leaders of a church in transition are called to “*up their game*”. The Wardens, **Pam Ely** and **Anne Newton** have stepped in generously and faithfully sharing their time and wisdom in so many ways. In the absence of a rector, the Canons of the Episcopal Church designate the Wardens to be responsible for the liturgical life of the church, as well as to be its financial and programmatic leaders. Securing supply priests for Sunday worship as well as the responsibility of hiring of an Interim Rector fell to the Wardens. Given Anne's earlier role as co-chair of an earlier rector search committee and with Pam's significant connections with the wider Wilton community, they managed this responsibility with faith and steadiness. As Anne steps down this Annual Meeting from her role as Warden, as well as envisioning a new life in retirement in the near future, St. Matthew's and I offer our abiding thanks for her lovely way of presence, and of leadership, and of caring for one and all at St. Matthew's. Thanks be to God for Anne. And for Pam who will continue to serve as Warden, preparing to call and on-board the next rector of St. Matthew's, we offer our collective thanks and appreciation. She is patient, thoughtful, wise, and has a flair for being “the leven-in-the-lump” of St. Matthew's, giving rise to numerous occasions of celebrating, *in spite of*, a variety of challenges.

And to other officers: **Rob Kyle**, Treasurer; **Brian Angerame**, Assistant Treasurer; and **Jennifer DeAngelis**, Clerk; as well as members of the Vestry, we offer great thanks for your faith in all things. Any organization operating with an anticipated deficit functions with a degree of anxiety. Facing this challenge head-on, Rob has worked diligently with the highest integrity to claim sources and means by which St. Matthew's would continue to serve one and all with grace and the Spirit's power. Rob, Jennifer and Brian will thankfully continue their roles as wisdom keepers and guides, providing generous guidance for the future. As we bid thanks for **Beth Baker's** spirited Vestry service (sparking concerns we otherwise would overlook), we relish the continued ministries of **Eleanor Arnold**, **Endy Perry**, **John Pearson**, **Bob Giolitto**, and welcome **Becky Hudspeth** as a new member of the Vestry.

Because of previous commitments as a Sunday-supply priest, I was unable to worship with St. Matthew's until June 29, 2025. From February through the end of June aided by guest preachers, (and resolute staff and Vestry), St. Matthew's forged forward, fulfilling all the responsibilities in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. Some weeks earlier, I was present in the church office two days a week. As your quarter-time (1/4) priest, I continue that pattern; Sundays and two days a week for administrative, pastoral and writing responsibilities.

One of the striking things about St. Matthew's is the creativity and strength of the congregation. Blessed with leaders in Christian education, social action, information technologies and media, as well as with backgrounds in finance, leadership, education and the environment, St. Matthew's is poised to faithfully face the future. As you step into that vision, I am confident St. Matthew's will call a dynamic rector--that together *you will forge a fulsome, faithful future* of ministry and service in Jesus.

John H. Branson, Interim Rector

Wardens' Report 2025: Pam Ely and Anne Newton

While this past year brought a set of challenges to St. Matthew's it has also revealed our resilience, and our commitment to our beloved parish and to each other. With God's help we endured, learned and continued to serve our community.

Our story continued to be one of lifting each other up in whatever manner was needed. Marissa left us in February, making sure we had a full slate of supply clergy until the end of June. John Branson, who had been working with the staff and lay leadership during the week since Marissa's departure, was then available to join us on Sundays. A big thank you goes out to Tommy and Irina for holding the parish together, embracing the supply clergy every Sunday, and helping them find their way through a Sunday morning in a strange place. We are grateful for their commitment to St. Matthew's and carrying the load for those many months. Tommy alone preached and celebrated 10 Sundays for us; no small feat.

In June, we had a successful Parish picnic, our griller Brian Angerame and comrade Endy made delicious food, and parishioners filled in the rest. We don't often have the opportunity to sit and eat with each other so it's a welcomed time for all of us.

Our Fall opening was a celebration with our Presbyterian neighbors across the courtyard. We have not done this together in a long time. It was a joint effort with a bouncy house, petting zoo, good food and the opportunity to sit down and share an afternoon of fellowship. Since then, we have enjoyed sharing our choirs and church school activities. There is a concerted effort now to find more events and activities to do together.

October found us planning for the Trunk or Treat event. Thanks to Kate DeAngelis and Becca LaMantia, we had a fun afternoon of trick or treaters, yummy sliders from Brian's grill, petting Jen Angerame's very patient chicken, and seeing Beth Baker in costume with a well decorated car. A very successful afternoon.

We held our very fun Boogie and Bid Auction in November. We want to give a very loud and grateful thank you to our young adults, especially Kate, Becca and Endy who worked hard to give us a delightful night. They came up with the theme, decorations and supplied the handsome new auctioneer with his fancy red coat!! This group has been so helpful and committed to St. Matthew's future and its success; they are a joy to have around, and we are so grateful to all of them. We are very lucky to have such an amazing group of young people amongst us. A surprising number of parishioners had kept their 70's outfits, or borrowed one, many fashion memories of the past arrived that night. A big thank you to the ladies who organized the food: Eleanor Arnold, Pam Carlson, Beth Baker, Amy Gubner and Anne Newton as well as all of the volunteers who contributed food with that special 70's flair.

Around eighteen months ago, the Wardens and Marissa started to explore an opportunity to look at some of the assets around both churches. St. Matthew's and the Presbyterians contracted with Stewardship Realty to explore the possibility of enhancing some of the property. The Vestry and the Presbyterian Session met with Dan Panitz from Stewardship Realty in December and listened to his proposal. We all came away agreeing that what Stewardship Realty was suggesting was not in line with our hopes for both churches. It was disappointing as we had wanted to create housing for a certain market, with an affordable addition. Between the current regulations, including restrictions with water and a sewer lines, what we had dreamed of was going to be too expensive and would not have made both congregations proud. We have not given up trying other ideas. Both parishes are looking for something that will lift us up and offer something special to the surrounding community.

This has been a busy year filled with wonderful fellowship opportunities, continued mission and social justice outreach to our community and ongoing collaborations with our Presbyterian brothers and and sisters. As our story continues to unfold it will be an exciting for us as a parish as we discern who we are and who will be our next Rector. Our prayer is that we continue to hold each other close and spread our arms wide in radical welcome to the people and opportunities that come our way.

MISSION

We continue to financially support our two partners, Circle of Care, and Open Doors, with some funds to WI-ACT for their meal packing event. What has been a wonderful and a very significant addition to our Mission Outreach are the pop ups coming from our Social Justice Committee and our surrounding community. To name a few here:

- Manna House: ingredients provided and delivered for a meal-6 times a year
- Donations provided to those impacted by the fires in Southern California
- Toiletries and socks for Open Door's Stuff-a-Sock campaign
- Drop your Drawers
- Backpack Drive
- Halloween Costumes for Open Doors
- Knots of Love – blanket making
- Gift Drive - Circle of Care
- Gift bags for Wilton Seniors
- Purse and Wallet Drove
- Sweatshirts for students at Norwalk Multilingual School
- Diaper Collection Drive...if you wondered about the large pyramid of diapers in the Narthex

This list speaks for itself! We have helped many agencies and programs support their own communities. We continue to have an outreach that reflects our commitment to our neighbors and their needs.

Recognitions 2025

BETH BAKER

Beth served Vestry for her full term and then offered to stay another year. Beth is herself ordained, and so brought a very thoughtful, and spiritual lens to the meetings. Beth was always willing to help with the auction, food for events and of course her Blueberry Buckel, which we have all come to love. She will be missed and we need to make her promise she will continue to bring the Blueberry Buckel to all our events.

ROB KYLE

We need to acknowledge the amount of hours Rob has put in for St. Matthew's. Especially lately as we had to submit many financials to the Diocese. Rob has proven to be dedicated to the parish and continues to keep us all on track.

JOHN BRANSON

John has stepped into the Interim Rector role seamlessly. He has helped us navigate important services. His sermons inspire us to do better and be better. John is the rock we are all currently leaning on until the new Rector is called. We are lucky to have him amongst us.

TOMMY WATSON

Tommy has worked hard to create an open communication with the Presbyterians, including a shared church school curriculum where Tommy has represented the Episcopal tradition. His sermons are thoughtful and when Tommy sings, we are all happy to stop and listen. Tommy held us together during our supply time. He is an integral member of our parish.

IRINA GEORGIEVA

Irina brings us many Sundays of beautiful music; the choir's voices fill the church with inspiring hymns and anthems. Those of us in the pews are often transformed by the music that Irina selects. We are very lucky to have all that talent every Sunday. Irina's leadership and competence show her faithful commitment to St. Matthew's.

SHARON PEARSON & JENNIFER ANGERAME

We extend a great deal of gratitude and heartfelt thanks to both Sharon and Jen for their countless hours shared with our parish this year. Their creativity, gifts and dedication enrich our St. Matthew's community in ways both seen and unseen, and we appreciate all they continue to do.

NANCY JOHNSON

We owe Nancy a huge thank you for all the behind the scenes work she does week after week. When the copier decides to malfunction, Nancy is the one who has to find a way to print the bulletins, sometimes having to go to Staples late and make a special trip back to church. She manages emails, calendars and anything that comes through the office. Nancy was integral during the time we had supply priests; she helps manage the website, making sure it's up to date. Nancy is on the front line every day and we are very grateful.

MATT HENSHAW

Another wonderful young adult who shows up Sunday after Sunday to help us with our technology. Matt is the face behind our Livestreams and all things tech - he is so faithful in his dedication, we are lucky he gives up part of his Sunday for us.

ANNE NEWTON

Anne has been my partner for several years. Anne had many roles in the church...she ran Stewardship, directed the pageant, was the clerk of the Vestry, a prior member of the Vestry and previous warden who is now stepping down from her most recent term as a warden. She is looking forward to more visits with her granddaughter, exploring more aspects of her own life - maybe take up a new hobby. Anne has been so faithful in her service to all of us. I have been fortunate to have her by my side, with her calm assessment of what needed to be done St. Matthew's has been blessed by her long and dedicated commitment to all of us. She is a treasure.

Though we have our challenges, it's clear we are a parish that cares deeply about each other, have been very fortunate in our leadership and will continue to face the future with faith in what God has in store for us

Faithfully,
Pam and Anne

Director of Music Ministries 2025

The 2025 program year marked a season of deepening relationships, artistic growth, and joyful collaboration within the Music Ministry at St. Matthew's. Building on the strong foundation established during my first year, this past year focused on strengthening choral fellowship, enriching worship through diverse and meaningful music, and expanding the Arts at St. Matthew's as a vital expression of our shared ministry.

Choral Fellowship and Worship

St. Matthew's Choir continues to inspire through its commitment, musicianship, and generosity of spirit. This year's repertoire reflected both versatility and intention, offering music that supported worship while inviting the congregation into deeper engagement.

A particular highlight of the year was the joint concert with the WPC Choir in June, during which our combined choirs and professional instrumentalists performed Schubert's *Mass in G Major*, Mozart's *Regina Coeli*, and Haydn's *Te Deum*. The collaboration was marked by joyful rehearsals and a shared sense of purpose, culminating in a performance that celebrated musical excellence and ecumenical partnership.

Throughout the liturgical year, special choral and instrumental music enhanced major services, including Advent, Holy Week, Easter, and Christmas Eve. On Christmas Eve, the choir offered Vivaldi's *Gloria* as a choral prelude for both services, accompanied by string quartet, oboe, and trumpets. Vivaldi's Concerto for Two Trumpets was featured as offertory and postlude music, and the full ensemble accompanied the congregation in hymn singing, creating a festive and immersive worship experience.

Special Services and Seasonal Worship

In addition to Sunday worship, the music ministry supported and shaped several special services:

- Taizé Candlelight Services, offering contemplative prayer through chant, silence, and candlelight
- Lenten Compline, providing a virtual space for reflection and rest during the penitential season
- Holy Week services, culminating in the celebration of Easter
- Advent services, including two special Advent worship services with strings

These offerings created space for stillness, reflection, and communal prayer, and were warmly received by the congregation.

The Arts at St. Matthew's – Season Review

The Arts at St. Matthew's continued to grow as an integral part of parish life, extending our ministry beyond worship and inviting the wider community into the church.

This current season includes a range of offerings in collaboration with WPC and local artists, including:

- Dream work seminar in partnership with WPC
- Shared singing events with WPC

These programs affirmed the value of interdisciplinary artistic exploration as a form of spiritual practice and community building.

Looking Ahead

As we look toward the coming year, plans are underway for continued musical and artistic offerings that build on this momentum. Upcoming Worship Services will continue to feature special music during major feast days and seasons of the church year.

Gratitude

I am deeply grateful for the dedication of the St. Matthew's Choir, our instrumentalists, section leaders, and volunteers, as well as for the ongoing support of clergy and staff. It is a privilege to serve a congregation that values music and the arts as essential expressions of faith. I look forward with great anticipation to the continued growth of the music ministry and the Arts at St. Matthew's in the year ahead.

Faithfully,

Irina Georgieva

Assistant to the Rector for Formation and Engagement

Winter and Spring 2025

The year 2025 presented our community with significant challenges and transitional phases that tested our resilience and adaptability, and we handled them well through prayer, faith, grace, and levity. Despite these obstacles, it was also a year characterized by remarkable achievements that contributed to the growth and engagement of our community.

A key highlight was the effective leadership demonstrated in the Confirmation and Church School Classes, which played a vital role in nurturing the spiritual development of our children and youth. Under the guidance of clergy and laity, these programs facilitated a deeper understanding of faith, helping participants navigate their spiritual journeys with confidence and purpose. Engaging lessons, interactive discussions, and creative activities not only educated but also fostered meaningful connections among peers, enriching their sense of community and belonging.

Through these initiatives, we witnessed an inspiring commitment to cultivating the next generation of faith leaders, guiding our young people in their exploration of beliefs, values, and personal faith journeys. This collective effort was instrumental in fostering a vibrant, engaged community dedicated to supporting one another through both challenges and triumphs.

Additionally, we successfully organized memorable Holy Week Services that offered our congregation a time of reflection and connection. This was complemented by a distinguished Easter Service, celebrated with heartfelt enthusiasm and reverence, where we came together to commemorate the essence of Easter. The Easter Egg hunt was a delightful addition, providing joy and fellowship for families and children in our community.

We revitalized our Pub Theology gatherings, creating a welcoming space for open dialogue and the exploration of faith-related topics in a relaxed environment. Lastly, we took the time to honor our high school seniors and our confirmand, Douglas Gubner, who was confirmed on Saturday, June 7, 2025, at Christ Church, Greenwich, CT.

We recognize that one of our ongoing challenges is the need for more volunteers to support our Formation initiatives. Additionally, we understand that school-related activities on Sunday mornings can hinder our children and youth from regularly attending church. We truly empathize with the demands on their time and appreciate the crucial roles of both education and spiritual growth; and their presence is a gift to our community. Our Summer Kick-Off was a fantastic success, wrapping up an especially fruitful and spiritually uplifting winter and spring.

September through December 2025

The new program year, 2025-2026, began in September 2025 with a traditional Rite II Service and an enthusiastic Fall Kick-Off event featuring a bouncy house and a petting zoo. This celebration welcomed the community back and marked the resumption of church activities, generating excitement among both families and parishioners. The joyful atmosphere established a positive foundation for the months that followed.

In October, the youth group participated in a lively outing at the local bowling alley. This event fostered camaraderie and helped participants form new friendships. Later in the month, the group took part in the Rise Against Hunger initiative, working together to make a meaningful difference for those facing food insecurity.

November was a month filled with service and fellowship. The youth organized and hosted a Rake-n-Roll event at the Hudspeth's home, where they gathered to rake leaves and enjoy cookies, cider, and time spent together. This sense of community was further extended when toddlers from the nursery and children in kindergarten through seventh grade created Thanksgiving cards for the residents of Ridge Crest at Meadow Ridge in Redding, CT. These thoughtful gestures helped spread warmth and kindness throughout the community. In addition to these activities, I led a two-Sunday Bible Study focusing on Paul's epistle to the Galatians.

December was highlighted by our festive Christmas pageant. A particularly memorable moment of this event was the participation of a dog dressed as a sheep, which delighted attendees and added a unique charm to the pageant.

Throughout the fall, the church achieved many successes in formation, fellowship, and community building. One of the most laudable feats was that the youth were able to meet more in person for fellowship, community building, and fun. Despite these achievements, some challenges remain. Chief among these is inconsistent participation in formation programming and a shortage of volunteers to assist with teaching Church School. Addressing these issues will be critical as we seek to strengthen our ministry and ensure its vitality in the coming year.

2025-2026 Continuing Education Activities for the Assistant to the Rector

Online Courses:

In 2025, I had the privilege of enrolling in three online courses through Yale Divinity School. The first course covered Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, the second focused on the Book of Revelation, and the third explored the Lukan nativity narrative. Each course provided an intellectually rigorous and deeply engaging experience, further igniting my curiosity about living faithfully as a follower of Jesus. I am currently taking a class on the Sermon on the Mount.

Soul Shop Certification:

Soul Shop is a faith-based initiative focused on suicide prevention and mental health support within communities. It offers workshops and training for clergy, lay leaders, and faith-based clinicians to equip them with the skills to recognize and respond to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. The program aims to create a safe environment where individuals feel comfortable discussing their struggles, particularly in communities facing high suicide rates, such as Black churches and Hispanic communities. Soul Shop emphasizes the importance of community support and the role of faith leaders in addressing mental health issues and providing resources for those in need.

Recently Ordained Clergy (ROC) Meetings

This required ministry program is designed to support newly ordained clergy as they begin their faith journey. Participation is mandatory for both newly ordained deacons and priests for 2 years. The classes are conducted via Zoom on Friday evenings, and in-person meetings are scheduled for Saturday morning and afternoon, throughout the program year. This initiative is an invaluable resource for professional and spiritual development, and these gatherings occur at least four times a year.

Spiritual Direction Sessions

Spiritual direction sessions serve as an essential component of my life as a priest. These sessions provide dedicated time and space for deep reflection, personal prayer, and attentive listening to how God is at work in my ministry and spiritual journey. Through regular spiritual direction, I can nurture my own spiritual health, gain clarity in discerning God's guidance, and remain grounded in the call to serve others with compassion and integrity.

2025-2026 External Engagement

- I am a member of the Wilton Coalition for Youth, the Wilton Youth Council, and I am developing a relationship with the local YMCA.
- Each first and third Thursday at 1:30 pm, I celebrate Eucharist at Ridge Crest at Meadow Ridge, Redding, CT. In effect, I am a chaplain there.
- I was a member of the diocesan planning committee for the clergy Pre-Lenten Retreat entitled "Living in Hope".

Respectfully submitted,
Tommy

Altar Guild & Flower Guild 2025

During 2025, St. Matthew's Altar Guild was busy doing the Lord's work of preparing for all worship services held in our church. In addition to the normal weekly Sunday Eucharist, we attended to our celebratory services at Easter and Christmas. We also provided support for Taizé services along with baptisms, weddings and funerals and memorial services. The Altar Guild is made up of parishioners who devote their time and talent to caring for the sanctuary, preparing the church for worship and maintaining the church linens, altar hangings and vestments. Our members enjoy a special bond of fellowship as we bring God's presence into our lives by sharing the preparation for the worship service.

We are always looking to enhance our membership so please consider joining us in this wonderful service to St. Matthew's. Please contact Betsy Pettit or Kim Olson if you are interested.

The Flower Committee is tasked to create altar flower arrangements for Sunday services, as well as decorate the church for Easter and Christmas. Once again, the altar was dressed with flower arrangements and potted plants. Due to budget concerns, we are using more potted plants at the altar throughout the year, and we plan on using them this spring and summer to spruce up our outside beds as well. Celebrations and memories were still celebrated with our dedications and announced via the bulletin and social media channels, and flowers were delivered to loved ones. Do you wish to celebrate a loved one or a special date?

Check out our flower calendar: www.stmatthewswilton.org/flowers

ALTAR GUILD: Nancy Brautigam, Jennifer DeAngelis, Debbie Fuller, Char Griffin, Amy Gubner, Sharon McKenna, Kimberly Olson, Betsy Pettit, Joy Ruterma



Cemetery Committee 2025

For the information of our newest parishioners, Saint Matthew's Parish Cemetery is located just north of and adjacent to the Wilton Town Hall on Danbury Road (Route 7). The earliest grave sites date back to 1800. A number of available gravesites remain, and a Memorial Garden is maintained for the interment of ashes. It is very important to remember that we had a guiding light for many years, Winifred (Winkie) Chelsey who gave her heart and soul to the cemetery and whose records and foundation we rely on today. Winkie passed away in 2024 and we are forever grateful to her leadership. You will see the bench dedicated to her by the memorial garden.

We reported last year that our supporter, Jack Horner, a stonemason who had worked for many years with Winkie, had raised and re-set the cross at center of the original Memorial Garden. In the early spring of 2025, Jack completed the new Memorial Garden "ring" with shrubs and flat stone markers. Great thought was given to the layout of the garden and the markers. We visited other Wilton cemeteries and arrived at a garden design that is both keeping in size and more broadly spaced than others. Just as the garden was completed in April, we received a request from Winkie's family to inter her ashes here. Everyone was on board. Our regular vendors for landscaping, interment and engraving volunteered their services for Winkie and she was the first to be interred in the new Memorial Garden in May. Winkie's family was so surprised and grateful to see where she is with her name on the marker.

With donations to cover the initial costs of the Memorial Garden the first half of the year, we were in good shape. Unfortunately work on the building of the stone wall to hold the names of those interred in the original Memorial Garden was slowed but will be completed in 2026. In addition, the long drought impacted the health of our trees. We had to take down one large tree, and 2 more were taken down (along with marker damage) by storms. Fortunately, Diocesan insurance partially covered the damage. We are waiting an estimate on repairing the broken markers. We also had to continue a knotweed spraying program.

We had 1 interment in the Memorial Garden this year, and 2 full plots were reserved, all from families who have long time connections to St. Matthews.

Fiscally the year continues to highlight our challenges. Our opening balance was \$25,881 and our closing balance was \$23,892. We had a considerable amount of pro-bono work done plus donations of \$13,797. In order to maintain our financial base, however, we will need to continue the drive for donations. We will also need to review our pricing for both regular gravesites and the Memorial Garden. Our sole committed non-recurring expense for 2026 is the brass plaque with the list of names for the new memorial wall, for which we are waiting an estimate. When the wall is completed, we would like to have an open house for the congregation.

We look forward to the coming year.

Dodo Roberts

Paul Reis

Co-chairs

Liturgical Assistants 2025

Liturgy is “work of the people” and it takes many individuals to make our worship come alive with many leaders. Lectors (all who can read are welcome no matter one’s age), and Eucharistic Ministers assist in many ways in our services. I am grateful to all those who continue to offer their voices and assistance as we join in worship together.

Lectors

Brian Angerame
Beth Baker
Jean Campbell
Caroline DeAngelis
Adair Garis
Bob Giolitto
Amy Gubner
Vytas Kisielius
Mary Obermayer
Janet Nobles
John Pearson
Sharon Pearson
Chris Perry
Anna-Kate Reis
Paul Reis

Eucharistic Ministers

Michael Angerame
Beth Baker
Pam Ely
Bob Giolitto
Vytas Kisielius
Anne Newton
Sharon Pearson

Anyone who is interested in becoming a lector or Eucharistic Minister, please speak with me. We welcome more voices in these roles and training is provided for both roles.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Ely Pearson

sharonepearson@gmail.com

203-984-1228

Nursery Care 2025

The WEPCO Nursery continues to be a consistent and welcoming ministry for families with young children at St. Matthew’s and Wilton Presbyterian churches. We have recently secured a permanent Sunday nursery helper, Katie, a junior at Wilton High School, providing stability and reliable coverage each week. Attendance was fairly steady, with an average of two to three children most Sundays.

The nursery is open year-round, including throughout the summer months, and serves children from newborn through age four. This ongoing availability allows families to participate in worship, knowing that their children are cared for in a safe and nurturing environment.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucia Sato

Endowment Investment Committee - 2024

The following is an update from the St. Matthew's Endowment Investment Committee. As of December 31, 2025, the account balance (at Vanguard) of The Endowment Fund of St. Matthew's Parish totaled, \$4,752,509. This account balance plus the mortgage bond of \$639,225 brings the total Endowment Fund to \$5,391,734. The prior year-end balance was \$4,704,607.

As a reminder, in 2017, the Vestry approved the repayment of the St. Matthew's mortgage owed to Bankwell using funds from the Endowment Fund, resulting in substantial interest benefits to the church. St. Matthew's continues to make timely principal and interest payments to the Endowment Fund per the original mortgage amortization schedule. As of 12/31/25, all mortgage payments are current and on schedule while the outstanding mortgage balance is \$639,225. This balance owed back to the fund is treated as a fixed income investment of the Endowment and carries a 3% interest rate.

The Endowment Fund distributed \$115,000 during 2025. The annual draw for 2025 was calculated at \$165,000 or 4% of the three-year trailing average market value (\$4,133,439) which is calculated annually as of September 30th. The annual distribution is customarily made in two semi-annual payments to the church, but funds may be requested sooner by the STM Treasurer if needed for cash flow. In late 2024, the Endowment Fund made an extra \$50,000 distribution at the request of the Vestry to assist with tight year-end cash flow for the church. This extra \$50,000 distribution was able to be reclassified simply as an advance of the 2025 distribution once the parish caught up on cash flow through a combination of increased pledge receipts and reduced expenses in the first half of 2025. Based on the current 9/30/25 calculation (new 3-yr avg of \$4,663,443), the Endowment contribution to St. Matthew's for 2026 will jump to \$187,000.

The committee continues to oversee the investments held at Vanguard in a predominantly growth-oriented equity portfolio with ~80% equity and ~20% fixed income exposure. This account is managed in conjunction with our ~\$639K mortgage which represents a large part of our overall fixed income allocation. The combined assets make up the totality of the St. Matthew's Endowment with an overall allocation closer to 70% equities and 30% in fixed income. There were no new gifts received to the Endowment Fund in 2025, but there are many pledges and bequests made by current and former parishioners that will someday benefit the Endowment Fund and provide annual support to St. Matthew's for generations to come.

Please feel free to contact any of the members of the Endowment Investment Committee with any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted by your Endowment Investment Committee

Chris Perry
Bob Dalldorf

Education for Ministry 2025

Education for Ministry (EfM) is an adult program that meets weekly for group reflection and study to support formation for Christian ministry in daily life. In 2025 the program celebrated its 50th anniversary; it has seen over 120,000 participants over its history across the United States, Canada, and Australia. The curriculum is offered by the School of Theology of the University of the South in Sewanee and sponsored by the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. St. Matthew's currently has an active group of 12 individuals from eight congregations: St. Matthew's (Eleanor Arnold); Christ & Holy Trinity, Westport; St. John's, New Milford; St. Luke's Darien; St. Peter's Cheshire; St. Stephen's East Haddam; St. Thomas' in Bethel; and St. Paul's, Fairfield. Two participants will graduate in June 2026

EfM provides an education in the content of the Christian tradition through reading the Bible alongside some basic biblical commentary, church history, and practical introductions to Christian theology, spirituality, and ethics. EfM also explores a wider concept of ministry, understanding that baptism marks our call to minister to one another in Christ's name in our daily lives. The current year's theme is "The Journey with God." Beginning September 2026, the focus will be "Following Jesus." *EfM: Classic* is the four-year program that one commits to one year at a time. *EfM: Wide Angle* is a new option – an overview of all four years taken in one academic year. Both meet together and is simply called EfM.

We currently meet weekly (September thru May) via Zoom on Mondays (7:00-9:15 p.m.); we begin with prayer, discuss our weekly assignment (print, video, and/or audio), share a theological reflection, and close with prayer. Examining life through a theological lens is the central discipline in EfM. We do this by looking at our life experiences (Experience/Action), the world/society around us (Culture), and our cherished beliefs and values (Positions) all alongside the Christian Tradition (Holy Scripture, BCP, history, etc.) that has been passed down through the centuries.

As the group's mentor (trained and acting on behalf of the School of Theology), I am not the group's "teacher" but a facilitator who walks alongside the group as we pray, learn, and discern God's call together. I am happy to answer any questions. As a graduate of the program in 1998 and a mentor from 1997-2013 in various congregations, I am grateful for the opportunity to mentor at St. Matthew's (since 2020) in this amazing program of theological reflection.

Do you enjoy meaningful conversation with trusted seekers?

Do you question different interpretations of biblical passages and want to explore them more deeply?

Do you seek fellowship that goes beyond coffee hour?

Are you seeking God and desire others to accompany you on your search?

Do you desire to learn more about prayer, Jesus, and what you truly believe?

If any of these questions resonate with you, perhaps EfM is for you. Registration for the new academic year will occur in July for the Monday Zoom group as well as a new Thursday morning onsite group. Watch for announcements in the weekly eNews, Sunday bulletin, and our social media beginning in June – or reserve a spot now as the group(s) fill up quickly!

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Ely Pearson

sharonepearson@gmail.com

203-984-1228

Social Justice Through the Numbers in 2025

Our committee utilizes study, discussion, mission work, and community resources to experience and respond to issues of social justice in God's creation. We aim to live out our baptismal covenant by seeking and serving Christ in all persons, working for justice and peace, and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

65 backpacks St. Matthew's parishioners donated to students at Norwalk Academy of Multilingual Students

52 social justice prayers included in our weekly Sunday bulletins and eNews

28 appliqued sweatshirts donated by parishioners, also provided to the students at Norwalk Academy of Multilingual Students

12 monthly meetings our group held to discuss goals and plans, including a zoom presentation by Amanda Dunham on the Buffalo Restoration Project in Upstate New York

8 Creation Care adult forums we led, discussing ways we can help preserve our earth

5 parishioners attended the Absalom Jones celebration service at St. Paul's in Norwalk

4 parishioners who wrote letters to the Town of Wilton in support of preserving parts of the John C. Walley historical home; **35** parishioners who signed a letter from St. Matthews in support

3 books on current social justice topics we read as a committee: James by Everett, The Night Watchman, by Erdrich, and Amity and Prosperity, by Griswold

2 adult forums we sponsored: Nick Foster from Wilton Historical Society on local Indigenous persons, and Paul Manfredi with Braver Angels on renewing civic culture and building trust across differences

2 field trips our committee sponsored: *Smoke in Our Hair*, a collection of works by Indigenous artists at the Hudson River Museum, and *To the Church of the Holy Sepulcher*, at the Frick, a collection of artifacts and gems from the 16th and 17th centuries given to the church by Roman emperors and monarchs.

1 Prayers of the People we wrote and read in honor of Juneteenth

1 lunch we prepared for our staff in honor of their hard work and continual dedication

Faithfully submitted,
Eleanor Arnold

Committee Members:
Eleanor Arnold, co-convenor
Bob Giolitto, co-convenor
Susan Abrams
Pam Ely
Becky Hudspeth
Paul Reis
Sharon Pearson

WEPCO's Annual Report for 2025

WEPCO (Wilton Episcopal Presbyterian Corporation) works on behalf of both Wilton Presbyterian Church and St. Matthews Episcopal Church. WEPCO is responsible for maintaining the shared spaces at the church complex to include the outdoor grounds and all indoor spaces excluding both sanctuaries. The Upper Core, the Lounge, the Parish Hall and all church school spaces are examples of the 15,000 square foot complex WEPCO maintains. WEPCO functions via operating and capital budgets approved each year by both churches.

Financially, WEPCO continues to remain diligent about monitoring all operating expenses. In addition to the \$20,000 operating capital approved by churches annually, WEPCO relies on rental income through contracted renters (Lower Core groups: Belden Hill Montessori school and Flat Vernacular wallpaper company, as well as Kiwanis, Wilton Singers, and seven AA – A New Life groups). WEPCO also relies on one-off rentals from various groups within Wilton and surrounding towns.

WEPCO continues to attract multiple Indian Cultural, non for profit, and social groups for larger scale one-off event rentals.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Non-Operating Capital: In 2025, WEPCO completed two-bathroom renovations to include new commercial grade LVT floors, toilets, vanity mirrors, painted walls and stalls, and wall accessories.

The budget for this initiative was \$30,000 split by churches, and \$29,020 was spent. Total Non-Operating Capital spent in 2025 - \$29,020.

Operating Capital: In 2025, WEPCO ended the year with a **net surplus of \$5,453.**

Some things of note:

- Additional Revenue:
 - The current Burns Construction lease expires in May 2026 with the possibility it may be renewed for some period of time. Also, there was an increase in Burns revenue due to the increase in the contract by \$1,500/month 7-months totaling \$10,500. This was not contemplated in the 2025 Budget.
 - Rental income came in over budget by \$5,238 or 27%.
- Expenses Under budget:
 - Payroll came in at \$5,700 under budget.
 - Contracts are under budget by \$1,940 primarily because WEPCO did not need to replace any fire extinguishers during inspection this year which saved \$1,200.
 - General Repairs – Non-HVAC came in under budget by \$2,081.
- Expense Over budget:
 - Fuel Oil came in over budget by \$5,000.
 - Snow Plowing / Parking Lot Maintenance was over budget by \$6,950
 - Landscaping was over budget by \$5,593
 - Refuse expense was over budget by \$1,727
- Capital Projects:
 - Non-Operating Capital Projects – The bathroom renovations cost \$29,020 and it was allocated \$30k. There is a remaining balance of \$980.
 - Total Cost of Operating Capital Projects - \$21,766:

- Various HVAC Repairs - \$10,710
- Fan Coil Project - \$ 4,380
- Commercial Floor Scrubber \$ 1,999
- Lamppost Project - \$ 3,852
- Piano Acquisition - \$ 825
- Donation to Wepco- cost to deliver

For 2025, there is a surplus of funds as follows:

Net Surplus from Operating Budget	\$ 5,453
NON-Operating Capital funds	\$ 980
Operating Capital funds	\$ 6,076
 Total 2025 Excess	 \$12,509

OTHER

As mentioned, Burns Construction lease has been extended through May 2026. Upon expiration of this lease, Burns has agreed to re-pave the entire parking lot allowing WEPCO to avoid a major cost.

The Spring and Sumer 2025 Clean-Up Days were only successful because of the strong Scout turn out and additional expenses would have been incurred without the level of Scout participation. Parishioners from both congregations are continually encouraged to join the Scouts in this tremendous effort of maintaining our beautiful campus.

We are extremely grateful for Susan Wilson, Avalon Consulting, Inc. and the meticulous management of WEPCO financials.

Thank you to the entire WEPCO Board of Directors, the Clergy, the Staff, WPC Session, and St. Matthew’s Vestry along with parishioners of both churches for their continued support in keeping our complex a special place for missions of faith and service to the broader community.

Respectfully,

Donna Savage
Wepco Director

2025 Board Officers and Members:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Mark Montgomery | Pastor Wilton Presbyterian Church |
| Secretary: | Tim Cummins |
| Bookkeeping: | Susan Wilson (Avalon Financial Consulting, LLC) |
| Other Voting members: | Andy Driver, Tim Cummins, Chris Perry |
| Ex-Officio Members: | Pam Ely (STM) |

Finance Committee 2025

Greetings Friends,

I want to start by thanking my good friend, Rob Kyle. He is our Treasurer. He has done an unfathomable amount of work this year preparing all the reports that the Diocese requires in support of hiring our new Rector. All of us on the finance committee have day jobs. Some of us work and commute 60+ hours a week. For Rob specifically, running the numbers and jumping through all the hoops required by the Connecticut Diocese was/is above and beyond the call to duty. If you see him in the Narthex (also known as the lobby) give him a hug and cookie. If you see him at Craft, buy him a beer. He deserves it.

For the purposes of this Finance Committee report, I will spare you all the details. Rob will run you through the numbers for 2025 and our projections for 2026 in his report.

Let me start my report by saying there is so much to be encouraged about. Our total amount pledged thus far, approximately \$309,000, is up year-over-year for the first time in several years. While the number of pledges is flat to down slightly (though we still haven't heard from some families yet), the core is strong, faithful and hearing God's call to give more back to Him and to St. Matthew's.

However, if we are being fair and honest with ourselves, our pledging base is getting more concentrated and top heavy. Our top 3 givers combined contribute over \$100,000. That is almost one third of our pledge base. Obviously, we love that some of our parishioners give many tens of thousands of dollars each, and we wish all our pledging families could. But the reality is they can't and they are giving as much as they can.

But it also means that we have greater risk. What if one of our largest givers retired to Florida or moved to some other location? One quick look around the pews is all that is needed to recognize that we aren't getting any younger (although I can say we look darn good!). Our goal should be to continue to expand our giving base, attract new members, and thereby diminish the impact of one of our key givers moving to warmer pastures. This is something on which future vestries and our new Rector should continue to concentrate.

So let's review a few numbers. Thus far for 2026, we have received pledges of almost \$309,000. I am hopeful we can get to \$315,000 to 320,000 when all is said and done. That is up from approximately \$306,000. This is encouraging and hopeful. When we add other gifts, plate giving and the auction and we get to revenue of approximately \$400k. However, our expenses are approximately \$600,000. That is what it costs to run St. Matthew's with a bare bones budget. We have filled that \$200,000 gap over the past several years through our normal endowment distribution as well as a series of one-time benefits, including the PPP loan forgiveness we received during covid, the cash flow coming in from the construction company renting "the back 40," and lower staff costs from the transition from Marissa to an interim rector. These are one-time events and not repeatable. We have also dipped into our endowment fund above the normal 4% payout that we have stipulated.

As Rob deftly forecasts in his report to the Diocese, we have a funding gap, beyond the normal distribution of the endowment, of approximately \$50,000 a year - that will grow to \$60,000 and eventually \$70,000 over the next several years. Hopefully our endowment assets will also grow, along with the 4% distribution. But our goal should be simple - close that gap. Let's get us back to only needing our 4% distribution from the endowment. Then we should endeavor to get back to only needing a portion of the endowment distribution for operations, using the balance to fund mission and capital improvements, or however God is calling us to use the gifts He has given us.

So while we should feel blessed that we have the endowment (which few other parishes have, thanks be to Rosemary Greer and other parishioners who have given to the endowment over the years), we should strive to decrease our reliance on it to fund our daily operations.

Likewise, we should strive to decrease our reliance on our largest pledgers. Of course, we don't want our largest pledgers to give less, but we want to diminish our reliance on their giving by adding new givers, and hopefully inspiring our other current pledgers to give more, if they are able.

So, I'll finish by exclaiming that we are blessed! Our pledge base is up year-over-year for the first time in a while. This is a good and joyful thing. Our "core" is strong and faithful. But the cold hard truth is that we are not getting any younger and our pledge base is concentrated. We can fix that over time by continuing to add new members and growing the pledge base. I am confident we will do this, fueled by the love we have for this place, and the excitement we will derive from having a new fulltime Rector. I will conclude this year's letter to you as I did last year, but with even MORE confidence – *we've got this!* Thank you for being you.

Faithfully,

Brian Angerame
Finance Committee Chair and Assistant Treasurer

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

2026 Summary Budget -- As approved 2/1/26

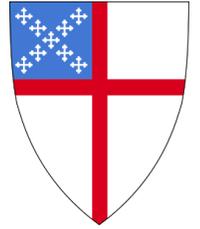
	2025 Budget	2025 Act	2026 Budget	'26Bgt vs '25Bgt	'26Bgt vs '25Act
Income					
Pledge Receipts	\$298,438	\$305,696	\$308,370	\$9,932	\$2,674
Plate Donations	5,000	8,075	7,500	2,500	(575)
Other Donations	30,000	50,504	30,000	-	(20,504)
Net Auction	37,500	38,884	38,500	1,000	(384)
Other Income	27,594	33,259	26,800	(794)	(6,459)
Total Income	\$398,532	\$436,418	\$411,170	\$12,638	(\$25,248)
Expense					
Administrative	41,017	41,206	42,658	1,641	1,452
Cemetery	2,500	-	1,000	(1,500)	1,000
Christian Ed	4,200	2,867	11,774	7,574	8,906
Clergy	228,823	209,088	197,558	(31,266)	(11,530)
Common Mission	56,290	56,290	56,290	-	(0)
Fellowship	6,750	2,087	6,400	(350)	4,313
Mortgage Interest	19,658	19,658	18,753	(905)	(905)
Music	139,820	139,820	143,213	3,393	3,393
Office	18,505	18,545	20,673	2,168	2,128
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Payroll	450	946	900	450	(46)
Plant	68,888	61,689	87,939	19,051	26,250
Professional Fees	18,871	18,678	18,804	(66)	126
Tech	15,567	13,373	12,967	(2,600)	(406)
Worship	1,500	1,119	1,500	-	381
Youth	1,750	631	1,750	-	1,119
Total Expense	\$624,589	\$585,995	\$622,179	(\$2,410)	\$36,184
Net Operating Income	<u>(\$226,056)</u>	<u>(\$149,577)</u>	<u>(\$211,009)</u>	<u>\$15,048</u>	<u>(\$61,431)</u>
TRANSFERS					
Endowment Distribution	163,000	115,000	187,000	24,000	72,000
Mission	(12,000)	(12,000)	-	12,000	12,000
Mortgage Principal	(27,705)	(27,705)	(31,151)	(3,445)	(3,445)
Capital	(25,000)	(25,000)	(10,000)	15,000	15,000
Unallocated	(98,295)	(50,295)	(145,849)	(47,555)	(95,555)
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-
CASH SURPLUS/DEFICIT	<u>(\$226,056)</u>	<u>(\$149,577)</u>	<u>(\$211,009)</u>	<u>\$15,048</u>	<u>(\$61,431)</u>

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
Balance Sheet Prev Year Comparison
As of January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025

	Dec 31, 25	Jan 1, 25	Change
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Checking/Savings			
Total Checking/Savings	\$273,374	\$307,602	(\$34,228)
Accounts Receivable			
Accounts Receivable	276	17,777	(17,501)
Total Accounts Receivable	276	17,777	(17,501)
Other Current Assets			
Other Receivable	639,225	668,603	(29,377)
Total Other Current Assets	639,225	668,603	(29,377)
Total Current Assets	912,875	993,982	(81,107)
Other Assets			
Collections	14,450	14,450	0
Endowment Life insurance	23,817	23,363	454
Investments	4,752,509	4,036,005	716,504
Total Other Assets	4,790,776	4,073,818	716,958
TOTAL ASSETS	\$5,703,651	\$5,067,799	\$635,851
LIABILITIES & EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable			
Accounts Payable	12,863	37,125	(24,262)
Total Accounts Payable	12,863	37,125	(24,262)
Credit Cards			
Chase Services #2963	602	1,398	(795)
Total Credit Cards	602	1,398	(795)
Other Current Liabilities			
Organ Donation Fund	4,393	8,839	(4,447)
Altar Guild Fund	563	563	0
Arts of St. Matthews Fund	2,678	3,012	(334)
Ass't Rector Discretionary Acct	875	435	440
Capital Reserve Fund	39,250	92,976	(53,726)
Cemetery Fund	22,992	25,882	(2,890)
Discretionary Funds	3,083	4,768	(1,685)
Flower Fund	9,260	9,720	(459)
Ian Harleman Memorial Fund	35,306	35,306	0
Memorial Fund	22,232	22,132	100
Music Fund	6,008	5,428	579
Mission Reserve Fund	202	(2,000)	2,202
Youth Fund	1,105	1,105	0
Direct Deposit Liabilities	0	0	0
Deferred Contributions/Revenue	104,363	0	104,363
Rectory Rental Security Deposit	10,400	0	10,400
Total Other Current Liabilities	262,709	208,165	54,544
Total Current Liabilities	276,174	246,688	29,486
Long Term Liabilities			
Endowment Mortgage	639,225	668,603	(29,377)
Total Long Term Liabilities	639,225	668,603	(29,377)
Total Liabilities	915,400	915,291	109
Equity			
Fund Balance	4,128,125	4,125,111	3,014
Net Income	660,126	27,397	632,728
Total Equity	4,788,251	4,152,509	635,742
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$5,703,651	\$5,067,799	\$635,851

Worship Schedule at St. Matthew's

Holy Eucharist on Sundays at 10am



Please keep an eye on our website and social media as well as our e-news. There you'll find information and opportunities to connect with friends and members of all ages.

Staff

Interim Rector	The Rev. John H. Branson, johnhoodbranson@gmail.com
Formation & Engagement	The Rev. Dr. Tommy Watson, tommy@stmatthewswilton.org
Director of Music Ministries	Irina Georgieva, irina@stmatthewswilton.org
Parish Administrator	Nancy Johnson, office@stmatthewswilton.org
Director of WEPCO	Donna Savage, wepco@optonline.net
Bookkeeper	Louann Miska, louann.miska@gmail.com
Technology Coordinator	Matthew Henshaw
Nursery Staff	Lucia Sato
Sextons	Alix Williams, Jairo Mejia

Wardens and Officers

Warden	Pam Ely	Clerk	Jennifer DeAngelis
Warden	Anne Newton	Asst. Treasurers	Brian Angerman
Treasurer	Rob Kyle		

The Vestry

Eleanor Arnold	Amy Gubner	Endy Perry
Beth Baker	Vytas Kisielius	John Pearson

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