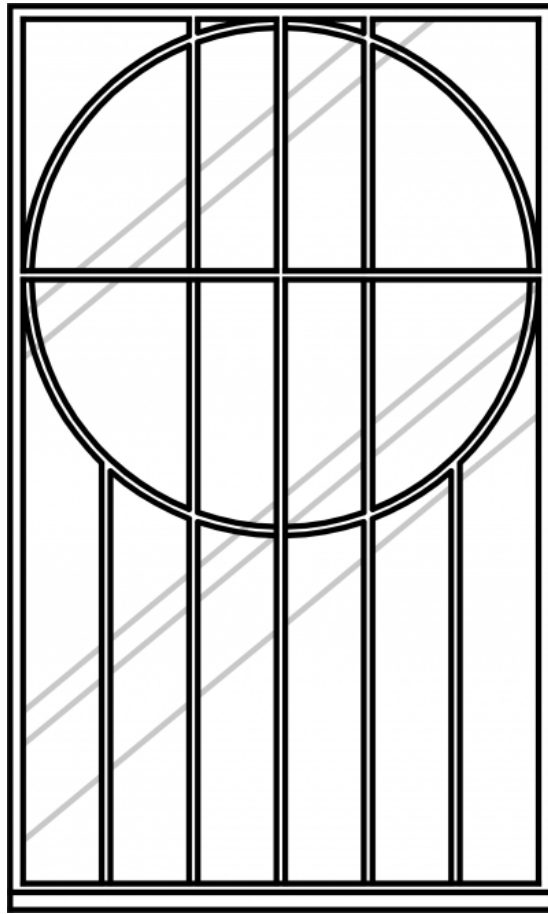




Saint Matthew's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

2023 Annual Report



Annual Parish Meeting
February 4th, 2024

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Bible Study

1 Peter 4:8-11

⁸Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ¹¹Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Annual Meeting Agenda
February 4, 2024
11:30 am

Call to Order	The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach
Opening Prayer	The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach
Bible Study	Pam Ely & Anne Newton, Wardens
Approval of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting Minutes	The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach
Introduction of Donna Savage, the Director of WEPCO	The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach
Remarks by the Rector	The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach
Remarks from the Director of Music Ministries & Organist	Andrew Leslie Cooper
Remarks by the Wardens	Pam Ely & Anne Newton, Wardens
Presentation by the Social Justice & Racial Healing Committee	Becky Hudspeth
Nominating Committee Report	Pam Ely & Anne Newton, Wardens
Election of Vestry, Officers, and Delegates	The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach
Recognitions	The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach
2023 Financial Review & 2024 Budget	Rob Kyle, Treasurer
Questions and Answers	
Closing Prayer	The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach
Adjournment of Annual Meeting	The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach

2024 Wardens, Vestry and Officers

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

Vestry Class of 2024

Amy Gubner
 Beth Baker
 Vytas Kisielius (one year term)

Vestry Class of 2025

Endy Perry
 Eleanor Arnold

Vestry Class of 2026

John Pearson

WEPCO Board Members: Pam Ely & Chris Perry

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
February 5, 2023 Annual Parish Meeting Minutes
11:30 am

Call to Order: The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach, Rector of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, called the meeting to order at 11:32 am.

Attendance:

- The meeting was held in person and virtually via Facebook Live.

Opening Prayer:

The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach

- Marissa very glad to be able to be here and to see everyone
- There is a change to the agenda: the Nominating Committee report will be presented by the Wardens. We will respond with a vote

Bible Study:

The Rev. Dr. Linda Spiers

Colossians 2: 6-7

- First reading
 - o What words or phrases jump out at you
- Second reading
 - o What phrases, lines, themes or ideas do you want to know more about
 - o What is God calling us to do at this time from this passage

Approval of 2022 Annual Parish Meeting Minutes:

The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2022 Annual Parish Meeting was made; it was seconded and approved unanimously by parishioners in attendance.

Remarks from the Rector:

The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 13. Highlights include:

- It is a long-written report, please read it
- Marissa wasn't sure if she was going to be able to make it in person today
- Marissa loves the Annual Meeting
 - o It is a way to look back
 - o To see where God has been in our lives
 - o And a way to look forward
 - o People have been doing this: looking back, finding where God is present, and looking forward for a long time
- Last year, we did a tremendous amount of work
 - o Some new people have joined us
 - o Seen tremendous growth
 - o The core is more faithful
 - o We are trying new things
 - o We are stronger than we were
 - o There are challenges ahead
 - o We are in a different place
 - o We need to figure out a way through it
 - o We need to dig down to deep roots, deeper than we had
 - o There are good things - growth in numbers, in ourselves, ways in which we love each other and the community, a genuine welcome here

- We need to hold these two things – the good things next to the harder reality - together and figure out how to move forward
- Things are different now, things are not working, and we need to think of new ways to be
- It is not the first time St. Matthew’s has needed to be creative and try out new things
- So keep that as the framework (holding both the good and a new way to move forward) as we tell the story here today
- Marissa highlighted how hard the staff and Officers are working
 - o They have put in much time and effort
 - o Deeply grateful for them
 - o Gratitude for Keith – for his stability, his generosity of spirit, and his faithfulness

Remarks from the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries:

Samantha Trolice

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 23.

- Samantha read her report in its entirety.

Remarks from the Director of Music Ministries and Organist:

Andrew Leslie Cooper

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 24. Highlights include:

- 2022 was his first full year at St. Matthew’s
- He loves this place, this community, this choir
- He spends lots of time in this room – it is his “Happy Place”
 - o It is quiet, an incredible space
- He enjoys making music here with us and for us
- Part of his adoration of this place is the choir
 - o This choir is a gift
 - o It is favorite part of his job
- Please read his full report
- It was a wonderful year
 - o Summer music camp was enriching for him
- There were some set backs
 - o Not always in person
 - o Choir had some Zoom sessions
 - o Some online offerings
- He thinks back to musical moments that enriched us
 - o Wants music to impact us, to enrich us
- Lots going on behind the scenes to bring back Arts at St. Matthew’s
 - o There was a concert on Good Friday
 - o There is more of that moving forward
 - o Arts at St. Matthew’s committee is up again
- He continues to work hard on ways to strategize about children’s music
- Everything I try to do here is to enrich your prayer
 - o Tell me your favorite hymn (or your least favorite)

Remarks by the Warden:

Pam Ely

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 20. Highlights include:

- This is what I know – we are faithful, generous, loyal, we take care of each other and those in need
- We are so thankful for our staff
 - o Sam is so engaged and always thinking of the kids
 - o Andrew was hired virtually and brings music and light every week
 - o Nancy keeps us going and keeps us successful
 - o Marissa cares for us, loves us, has helped us become a more faithful people, her sermons challenge our thinking with aha moments, and we are so thankful to have her
- Mission Projects
 - o Partner with Circle of Care and Open Door
 - o This place has a generous heart
- We have challenges ahead of us
- We have a lot of talent, including Marissa, Sam, and Andrew
- It will take all of us to make this work
 - o It will not be easy
 - o We will keep trying
- It is my honor to be your Warden

Remarks by the Warden:

Anne Newton

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 22. Highlights include:

- Blest to serve with Pam again
- Thank you to Marissa who leads us – both spiritual journey and the everyday stuff
- Thank you to the staff
- Thank you to the Vestry – sharing joys, sorrows, laughter, and tears all with a roll up your sleeves attitude to do the work
- Thank you to Chip for his support
- Pam shared highlights of what we did in 2022, now the focus is on how to build off of that in 2023 – we will share some sobering financial information
 - o We strive for transparency
 - o We need everyone's help
 - o We have a committed core but the reality is we are a different church today – less attendance, less volunteers
 - o We need everyone's commitment through stewardship
 - o St. Matthew's gives 10% of its operating revenue to the Diocese
 - o St. Matthew's pays its clergy, staff, and building expenses (WEPCO does a great job)
 - o We need your help and your ideas
 - Like the meeting held in early January – we need short and long term solutions to build and protect St. Matthew's – our spiritual home

Nominating Committee Report:

Anne Newton

The following slate of Officers and Vestry members was submitted for consideration - Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 11:

Officers:

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

New Vestry Members:

Eleanor Arnold (3-year term)
 Endy Perry (3-year term)
 Paul Reis to remain for a 1-year term

Election of Vestry, Officers, and Delegates:

The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach

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

Recognitions:

Pam Ely

- Bill Brautigam, Tom Carlson, and Chip Newton will be stepping down off the WEPCO board
 - o They have done so much work
 - o Keeping open, financially solvent, navigating renters
 - o We are so grateful for their service
 - o There is much to juggle to make it all work and they all worked hard
 - o There is a gift coming to be delivered to their homes
- Joe Magnano and Keith DeAngelis will be leaving the Vestry
 - o Keith has been Treasurer for the last 9 years
 - He is an optimist, faithful, and a superb member of the Executive Team
 - o Joe brought energy and intellect
 - He rewrote the by-laws
 - A gift is coming for him

2022 Financial Review and 2023 Budget:

Keith DeAngelis

Full report submitted in Annual Parish Meeting Handout page 38. Several slides were presented as well with information on the financials. Highlights include:

2022 Review:

- One year ago, we presented a budget with a (\$114k) loss
 - o Difficult visibility on pledge income estimates with parishioners moving away
- Actual loss (\$93k) vs. (\$114k) budgeted
- Income: \$511k vs. \$528k budgeted
 - o Pledge receipts (\$14k)
 - o Other donations \$18k
 - o Auction (\$22k)
- Expense: \$604k vs. \$642k budgeted
 - o Christian Education (\$7k) Adult Ed, savings effort

- Clergy expense (\$9k) Deacon, Rectory expense
- Plant (\$16k) Burns contract
- Tech (\$3k)
- Professional fees (\$3k)
- \$168k endowment distribution. \$79k reserved

2023 Budget presented:

- Presented budget with a (\$222,218) operating loss
- Income: total income budgeted \$107k below 2022 actual
 - Current year pledge income budgeted at \$326k (\$50k less than 2022 actual)
 - Several families moved away
 - Non-pledge donations budgeted at \$30k, (\$19k less than 2022 actual)
 - Auction budgeted \$2k lower than 2022 actual
 - No PPP loan in 2023 (\$34k in 2022)
 - Total income \$403,846
- Expense: total expense budgeted at \$22k higher than 2022 actual
 - Plant (\$3k)
 - Increased WEPCO income (Burns) partially offset by higher utilities, oil
 - Common Mission Support (\$6k)
 - Christian Ed + \$8k
 - Adult Ed, unable to replicate 2022 savings
 - Clergy expense + \$13k
 - Insurance, health benefits, rectory utilities
 - Overall compensation increase total about \$8k
- Total expense \$626,064

2023 Endowment:

- Balance at end of 2022: \$3.2 mm plus \$722k mortgage receivable
 - \$550k balloon payment due 9/2028
- 2023 Endowment distribution totaling \$165k:
 - Mission: \$5k (in addition to current \$8k balance)
 - Capital: \$0k
 - OpEx: \$160k

2023 Capital Expense:

- To be funded from the existing Capital Reserve Fund:
 - \$26k mortgage principle
 - \$10k WEPCO capital contribution
 - \$22k campus security project

2023 Resources to fund (\$222k) deficit:

- \$23k surplus from prior operations (remaining 2022 \$79k endowment distribution)
- \$160k from the 2023 endowment distribution
- Leaves \$39k in unfunded deficit
 - Resource TBD by Vestry in early summer

Questions and Answers:

The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach

- Question – is the pie chart percentage typical with other churches?
 - o Answer – yes it is - most places are smaller so we spend more on clergy but clergy is always where the most money goes, also we share plant expenses with another church and have the Burns contract
- Comment – St. Matthew’s did 3 impressive programs last week – Open Doors and what we are doing with them, the Witness Stone program, and watching Sam in action with her youth program. Also Andrew’s role – his tremendous spirituality and his technical ability. Addressing a \$222,000 deficiency is scary but things to me are far from scary as we have a large endowment. We need to take some risks within measure of what our resources are. We are grateful for Marissa’s leadership – it is a remarkable accomplishment, and she has wonderful sermons. We have an impressive core that can accomplish many things.
- Question – the Vestry has done as best as it can to cut expenses, but can we rent out this space?
 - o Answer – yes we can – it has been done before. We are going to need everyone’s best ideas and thoughts as we move forward. We can start on the revenue side. We can do more renting with the new security program almost completed.
- Gave Keith another round of tremendous applause
- Announcement for next week’s presentation by John and Sharon Pearson on their trip to the Holy Land
- Announcement for the upcoming Witness Stone program starting March 1
- Encouraged to volunteer here – you will meet some wonderful, smart people
- We will be in good hands with our new Treasurer, Rob Kyle
- We wished Marissa well with the new baby as this is the last time we will see her for a while, we thanked her for all she does

Closing Prayer:

The Rev. Dr. Linda Spiers

- Book of Common Prayer page 836
- All raised hands and offered a blessing to Marissa and her family

Adjournment of Annual Meeting:

The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach

Meeting was adjourned at 12:50pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer DeAngelis, Vestry Clerk

2023 St. Matthew's Committee Chairs

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

Sharon Ely Pearson
Betsy Pettit
Dodo Roberts, Paul Reis
Roger Valkenburgh
Chris Perry, Roger Valkenburgh
Rob Kyle
Jennifer Angerame
David Gortz
Clergy & Wardens, ex officio
Pam Ely
Elizabeth Baker, Pam Ely
Pam Ely, Chris Perry, The Rev. Marissa Rohrbach

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 2023

Rector
Director of Music Ministries and Organist
Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministries
Parish Administrator
Virtual Communications Coordinator
Bookkeeper
Director of WEPCO
Sexton
Nursery Staff

The Rev. Marissa S. Rohrbach
Andrew Leslie Cooper
Samantha Trolice
Nancy Johnson
Matthew Henshaw
Louann Miska
Donna Savage
Alix Williams, Jairo Mejia
Lucia Sato

Statistics

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
Sunday Services	55	55	63	62	100	108	103	94	105	102
Weekday Services	11	17	43	81	30	37	36	37	34	61
Pastoral Visits (Priest)	21	31	42	34	20	21				
Eucharistic Visits (Lay Visitors)	5	6	4	3	6					
Total Sunday Attendance	2,909	3,439	1,894		7,897	8,560	9,714	10,386	11,690	12,491
Baptisms	1	2	2	1	2	2	6	9	7	6
Confirmations	1	16	10	Postponed	23	23	23	12	26	30
Marriages	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	3	3
Funerals/Burials	3	3	1	5	5	6	5	3	11	11
Average Sunday Attendance	56	66			135	164	134	171	176	178

Total Weekly Attendance as defined by TEC & ECCT: 56

2023 Baptisms

Luke Paul Rossano Rohrbach

2023 Confirmation

Lily Cristini

2023 Reception

Paul Reis

2023 Funerals and Burial

Jerome George Cook
Trygve Hansen
John William Hackney

Rector's Report 2023

What a year it's been. I'm so grateful for all that we've shared and all that we've accomplished. Despite a great many challenges, we have continued to find our way forward together – sharing new experiences, time together, and the joy that God sends to bind us up. Thank you for all the ways that you encourage and sustain our life together.

One of the pieces of our life together that I am always so grateful for is the wide welcome of this place, the big hearts you all have, and the generosity with which you care for each other and our neighbors. In our Bible study for today, we're encouraged to maintain constant love for one another, to be hospitable without complaining, and to be good stewards of God's grace, serving in the ways each one of us is called to serve, using our unique and individual gifts. When I look around the congregation and at our life together, I see that all quite clearly. And I'm so frequently moved by the love, hospitality, and grace that we share in this place and that we share with those outside our walls. There is so much here for us to continue build up and to continue to share. And. We are all on a journey. We can always learn to be more patient, to be more gracious, to complain less. I see tremendous hope in that. The world needs this fellowship we share. They just don't know it yet. So we need to continue to seek new ways to share this love, hospitality, and grace in the name of Jesus Christ.

In some ways, our position and our challenges haven't changed all that much since we gathered at this meeting last year. We have some real challenges, the overarching challenge being financial. And while there is some good news about 2023, that we ended the year in a more positive position than we expected, it is certainly true that we face the same challenges in 2024. You'll hear more about our finances at the meeting from Rob, and the Officers and I will be prepared to answer any questions you have. We will continue to be transparent about this challenge – and we want your help to try to solve for it.

Another thing that continues to be true is that we continue to learn how to live a different life together – we are a smaller church than when I arrived almost six years ago. Many of our longtime, beloved friends moved south when they were able to sell their homes during the pandemic. We lost still more through the pandemic, as priorities changed for people. Because we're smaller, we've seen a significant drop in pledging as our attendance has declined. This is in keeping with other churches and the statistics gathered in polls all over the country – we are not alone. And by comparison, we are still in much better shape than 95% of churches in this diocese. Yet, we know that the world has changed. Priorities have changed. And we're seeing that in our community as well. We still have work to do in this area. We need to do some sifting through – to let go of what was, to make room for what will be. To grieve the things we may need to leave behind, and to make ourselves ready for who God is calling us to be now. While we've started this conversation, I don't think we've done the work to really make the changes. Much of our work in the next year or two will be about asking, “what's next?” And then trying to build in that direction.

And there's good news, too. Just like last year, many of you have increased your pledges heading into 2024. And some of you are new to the congregation and have already made a contribution – in many different ways. You all continue to surprise us and grace us with your generosity. In your pledging and in your giving at the auction and around the holidays, you continue to prioritize the health and wellness of St. Matthew's. And we, all of us as leadership, are deeply grateful for those gifts and intentions. Thank you.

It's also true that the fun of this place hasn't changed. We continue to gather in joy, to laugh, to share our lives together. We worship whole heartedly on Sunday mornings and sometimes at other times throughout the week. We've found new ways to teach, support, and honor our kids. My favorite new moment is when they

join me at the altar for communion on the first Sunday of the month. And later this spring we'll see the completion of this year's Confirmation program that began in September. All of this is on my plate, now, and I'm trying to manage many different tasks and initiatives at the same time. What's important is that some of our life continues as you'd expect – changed, but not ended. Just like our life in Christ.

Like all churches, we're struggling with a changing world and changing demographics around us. With a very few exceptions, every church I know is struggling with these same challenges. Many of the new people and families who moved into Wilton and the surrounding towns are not people who are looking for a church. We hoped more people would come visit – but many haven't. We are seeing some folks visiting and joining each year – and finding their place here among us. I give thanks to God for the gift that they are, for their presence among us, for the ways in which we are growing and changing because of these new people. God is good to us, indeed.

The fact that the world has changed will continue to raise questions for us about how to move into the next several years. What does the future look like? And how can we ensure the future of the parish in a world that doesn't yet know the value of being a part of Christian community? If we can't count on the numbers to grow more quickly, what else can we do to make sure that we are being good stewards of the grace that God has given to us here at St. Matthew's? To protect and make sure that this place and its legacy continue long into the future? This will be the project of 2024 and beyond – to seek new options and other ideas. It might mean that we have to make some difficult decisions and take some risks we hadn't expecting. I believe God will be with us in all of that – and that we will find a way forward together.

And that's why I'm comfortable presenting the budget that you'll see in our meeting. This budget has already been passed by the Vestry, but we will gladly answer any questions you have. I am still hopeful that we have options and that we have a path forward. We just have to be prepared to make some changes. And still, we're going to have to make some difficult decisions and some different decisions in the next few years in order to continue to be the place we want to be, to serve in the ways we want to serve. I want to encourage all of you to join us in this work – to think outside the box, to help us imagine a new future, new ways of doing things, and to see new opportunities when they come up. How do you think we can reach out more? How do you think we can better leverage what we have to serve God in this place and well beyond our walls?

I can assure you that the Officers, Vestry, Staff, and I are doing everything that we can do to reach out to our community and to engage in new ways. Most visibly this year, we've welcomed many people to our campus for Andrew's new series of the Arts at St. Matthew's. What a wonderful gift that has been to us and to our community. And there are many other ways that we continue to reach out as well. Your Vestry and I are working hard on identifying new opportunities and prioritizing what's important. As always, we're glad to hear from you if you have thoughts or ideas. And I would ask for your continued understanding. None of us have been in this position before – so none of us have easy answers. And the whole team – lay, ordained, and staff – everyone is working very hard.

For my part, I frequently feel like I'm doing the job of three people. Because we have a smaller team, there's quite a lot more on my plate than there has been in the past. And especially with the departure of Samantha, my day-to-day job looks quite a bit different. I've needed to pick up pieces in relation to Church School, Youth, and Confirmation that have not traditionally been mine. And there are other things as well that once were part of someone else's work – either staff or volunteer – that have now become mine. Just to give you a sense of some of that, there's the website – planning, maintenance, structure, etc. For the last two years I've needed to take on Stewardship – we just don't have anyone else that has enough room on their plate to chair. I've had help, of course, in tracking and managing – but the actual putting together of that season has fallen to me. Our efforts at restructuring and reimagining WEPCO have taken quite a lot of my time in the last two years. There are other things, too – I don't feel the need to go through a list, but wanted just to give you a sense of

some of the things that I'm picking up. I am easily working over 70 hours a week almost every week. And I still feel like I can't catch up.

Part of that is because we continue to run the place like we have the team in place that you all had years ago. In 2024, we're going to begin the process of simplifying some of this. And as part of that process, we'll be prioritizing – choosing the pieces we can't live without – and the pieces that we, perhaps, are being called to let go. I don't know what that looks like yet. And yet, I want to highlight for you that we need to make some changes in 2024. I look forward to talking more about that with you as you're able.

Leadership

A slate will be presented to you today that has already been approved by the Vestry. I pray that you also will accept and approve it, too – it represents the many gifts and talents of lay leaders in this place. There are a few things to note that might merit some explanation.

First, you'll notice that Anne and Pam are staying on as Wardens. The bylaws give me the opportunity to leave Wardens in place, with the approval of the Vestry. I believe that we need the continuity and security right now of steady leadership. And I appreciate the ways in which Pam and Anne are present, engaged, and supportive of our life and work together. We have a really wonderful working relationship – and things work when we put our minds to them, especially along with Rob Kyle – as they form the executive team. I'm grateful to all three of these people for the tremendous time and effort they put in – often unseen. They are so generous and giving and they love and serve this place faithfully.

We have faithful Vestry members who will stay in place. This is wonderful news, too. And this year, Vytas has committed to another year on the Vestry and John Pearson will be coming on for a three year term. John will bring us some fresh eyes and a new perspective matched with the understanding of someone who knows the place well and has been in quite a few different volunteer roles. Thank you, John, for being willing to take on this new adventure with us! Thank you to the whole Vestry for their time and attention, for the ways they give and serve. We are blessed by your ministry.

We have two Vestry members that are cycling off at this Annual Meeting. First, Pam Carlson, who has faithfully served for three years. You'll know that Pam has also helped to initiate and lead the Spirited Sisters' Group so generously. Pam brought a keen eye to the Vestry table, helped with marketing and strategy, and is always willing to lend a helping hand with everything from coffee hour to putting posters up around town. The other person cycling off this year is Paul Reis, who has served four years, having added an extra year at the end of his regular term last year. Paul has taken on leadership of the cemetery in recent years with Dodo Roberts and is an active member of the Social Justice & Racial Healing Group. Paul brings a thoughtfulness to the table that I have particularly enjoyed. Both Paul and Pam have been more than generous with their time and talent – we do hope they'll continue to be involved in their other projects going forward – and we thank you so much for your good work.

And I'm so grateful to my wonderful staff. Of course, this year we saw the departure of Samantha Trolice. And we celebrated her well as she took her leave from us. It was a good leave-taking, a good departure. Samantha brought us so many gifts, and she was faithful in her work until the day that she left. I'm so glad for her that she has pursued another opportunity that is fulfilling to her and is providing her with a different sense of life and security. And I'm sad for us. Her departure has certainly left a hole in our team and has changed the way that we do the work. The good news is that she knows she has a home here, and I expect that when things calm down again a little bit for her, that we'll see her again.

I have tried to find someone to fill a part time Children & Youth role, but I haven't been able to find the right person. At this point, I think I've interviewed about a dozen people. And I'm unwilling to hire someone just to hire. I want us to hire someone who will add to our life together and who will be a good fit for our kids. And I've yet to find that person. I'd be especially glad if that person was here in Wilton, connected to our community. So, if you know someone who might be looking for a flexible, part-time job – if they're great with kids – and have good energy – I'd love to know who they are. Lots of things are possible for the right person. And the most important thing to me is that our kids are safe and having fun.

Andrew continues to be a gift to us in his role. As I mentioned earlier in this report, I've been so glad to watch the flourishing of the Arts at St. Matthew's this year. What a wonderful revival that has been. And Andrew works very hard each week with the Choir to bring us faithful, traditional, and beautiful music to help us worship and to help us lift our hearts to God. I'm so grateful for the work of Andrew and our Choir – and I know that you are, too! It is such a gift to us. Andrew is, as ever, an important part of our team – contributing in many ways, working collaboratively with me, Nancy, and lay leaders. Some of you may have gone to the women's group in January when he talked with the group – many of you loved that, too! I'm so glad that Andrew continues to be a part of our story.

And of course, Nancy continues to keep us all running on track. She is the first face you see when you come to the office, the first to answer the phone when you call. She sends out countless reminders for Sunday services. She responds to requests at all hours. She runs mailings for us. Lays out and fixes bulletins. She helps all of us do our work more efficiently. And she troubleshoots quite a bit. Nancy helps to plan out our calendar, books rooms for us, and helps to keep all the trains running on time. She interfaces with WEPCO and WPC and maintains our contracts. And I could go on and on – and couldn't be more grateful for the many ways she makes my job easier. I'm so grateful.

We also have some very part time staff that help to make everything come together, too. We couldn't do what we do on Sunday morning online without Matt Henshaw. He has been so faithful to us in his work since the middle of the pandemic when I hired him. And he seamlessly made the transition to being here each week in person when we needed him. He is always up for an extra project, worked hard to figure out whatever technical issues we were having earlier in the year, and brings such a kind and gentle spirit to work on Sunday. I'm so glad to have him here and so grateful for the many ways he contributes.

As many of you know, Lucia Sato has been working in our nursery now for more than 25 years! That's such an amazing length of time and shows her dedication to our children. She is a gift to us, too – making sure that all the little ones who spend time in there are happy and cared for. She's always looking ahead and offering to help, especially since Samantha has been gone. She's an important part of our Sunday morning staff.

I'm grateful to Alix Williams and Jairo Mejia for their work at WEPCO. And to Donna Savage, our new Director of WEPCO. That is such a huge job, and Donna continues to learn her way around and move projects forward. We are really beginning to make progress and see it – and that is, in large part, because of Donna's tenacity. The WEPCO Board is working together in new ways – and I'm glad to see that some of the changes we made last year have begun to have a positive effect. We still have some things to figure out – some challenges ahead, to be sure. Nothing under the sun is perfect. But I'm grateful for the folks from St. Matthew's and from WPC who continue to work together to make sure that our campus is functional and welcoming to our communities and beyond.

I would be remiss if I didn't also say that I am grateful for my clergy colleagues across the courtyard as well. Since last year, WPC has made a change to the way their clerical position works – and they now split what once was one position between three pastors. It's been a great joy this year to work with Mark, Jessica, and Chris.

I look forward to seeing what new ways we might collaborate in the year ahead, bringing both congregations together and exploring who God is calling us to be at this time in this place.

It continues to be my great privilege to serve beside you as Priest and pastor. I am always amazed at the big heart of this community. And I am grateful for the moments, especially this past year, where I have been able to rely on this congregation in my absence. Not every Priest is so lucky. We were blessed in the first part of the year by the presence of the Rev. Dr. Linda Spiers while I was on family leave. And at the end of the year, while there was quite a lot of sickness and struggle in my house, I was able to rely on my staff and members of this congregation when I needed to be absent. And I knew that God would still show up and that church would still happen. I knew I could trust you to carry on – and I'm deeply grateful for that knowledge and trust. God has been good to us in our relationship these last nearly six years – and God has been good to this congregation for much longer than that.

In my house, we're looking forward in just a few days to my son's first birthday. And soon after Easter, we'll celebrate my daughter's third birthday. We are so very blessed by these wonderful, beautiful children. They have changed everything about our lives – and we couldn't be more grateful for that. I'm thankful for the many ways in which I am a better Priest because I have a partner who understands and supports this work and children who bring me more joy than I could have ever imagined. God has been good to me, too. And I am more grateful than I can say.

2023 was a full, busy, and vibrant year. Pam outlines quite a few of the things we built and did together in her report – so I won't go through them again here. But it was a good year – where much was learned and much was shared. It was a year of good and surprising gifts, for which we are grateful. And it was, as it always is, an opportunity for us to journey more closely with Jesus. Which we did. And for which I give thanks. Please read both Wardens' reports as they're thoughtful and insightful and help to tell our story – just like all the rest of the reports in this booklet. My thanks to all who wrote and edited, to all who give and lead.

I am looking forward to the year ahead with you. And I am hopeful that we will find – and seize – some new opportunities to share in God's work and God's joy. And some new opportunities to grow and strengthen the life of this place that God has given us to tend. May we be ever mindful of the love, hospitality, and grace that God has so generously extended to us – so that we might, in our own ways, together and as individuals, continue to generously share that those gifts with the world around us. Thank you for all you do.

Faithfully,

--Marissa +

Warden's Report 2023: Pam Ely

St. Matthew's faithful story continues as we look back at 2023 and see the many times we gathered as faithful Christians to raise each other up and those around us. Despite the loss of parishioners and the changing attitudes toward churches in general, we are a faithful community loyal to each other and to a place we all love deeply.

We have many challenges, Marissa and her staff are working harder and taking on jobs meant for a church with a larger staff. Our pledge base is smaller, our Finance committee with Rob at the helm, works to keep us solvent, finding ways to manage our monies which has its own challenges.

And yet, here we are celebrating what we did this past year and looking into what we can do next, understanding that the world has changed, that we are not the same church we were that we will never be that church again, however much we would like to go back. It does and can open other opportunities for us as a parish that has much to offer. And we still have a story to tell about us, who we are, and our commitment to each other and to St. Matthews. I am so pleased to see how much we did this past year.

Here are some our stories:

Last January /February, Liz Salguero came and talked to us about the work of Circle of Care, they are one of our mission partners and we have helped them give families a leg up when their children received cancer diagnoses. We had our intern Meg Stapleton Smith come and preach a very powerful sermon. People and families, we as a parish have lifted up and helped. That is a compelling story for us to tell.

Our Social Justice Group wrote compelling narratives for the Stations of the Cross, and we celebrated Easter with Rev. Linda Spiers. Marissa leaving for her maternity leave with her second child. We hosted an egg hunt at Open Door, with the generosity of the St. Matthew's parish the children had coloring books, crayons, cookies, snacks. We played games and watched happy kids for a lovely afternoon.

The Spirited Sisters group led by Pam Carlson and Stacey Savas continued to meet, offering fellowship and community to the women of St. Matthew's. One special event was having Andrew come and walk us through the workings of the organ, for many of us we had no idea of how complex an instrument and its possibilities. It was a good lesson for all of us.

The Renewal Work team has continued with their Gospel Dives, we gather after church to have lively discussions about the sermon and/or the Gospel. They are an amazing group of parishioners who continue to enlighten us with their thoughtful presentations.

On a very hot spring Sunday, Bishop Jim Curry came with his trailer and his passion Swords to Plow Share to make gardening tools and jewelry out of gun parts. Very clearly a passion for him, many of us including Marissa hammered the gun parts down to make something that didn't harm a human being. We all participated in the hot sun, and when we were done, Bishop Curry packed his trailer and drove away pleased that he had contributed to our day and made it special.

Our Social Justice Group with Sharon Pearson's leadership, brought the Witness Stone Project to St. Matthew's Julie Hughes, who helped us with the historic papers came and gave an intriguing talk on St. Matthew's relationship with slaves living in Wilton. Some who were married in the church, some who worked for the church and some who are buried in our cemetery. We honored John C. Wally who was a freed Wilton slave who contributed to St. Matthew's as well as to Wilton. Surrounding churches came to St. Matthew's and participated in the actual research. The culmination was placing a Witness Stone at the Historical Society with a moving ceremony, speeches by Douglas Gubner and other young participants.

Our summer read, *Braided Sweetgrass*, by Robin Kimmerer, a botanist, environmentalist, and professor. The book speaks to our relationship to plants and the environment and her thoughts on being a mother of two daughters. A group met after church to discuss the book and its significance in the environmental world today.

Several parishioners gathered on New Haven Green for an Interfaith Service Day. St. Matthew's was a sponsor of the event. We made sandwiches for the homeless shelter, painted a mural which was raised on I95, and the highlight was talking to Jewish and Palestinian teenagers about their hopes for the future. That interaction haunts me now as I watch what is happening in their respective countries. They were so full of hope, and now hard to imagine how they feel.

We held an outdoor service, and baptized Marissa and Lyn's son Luke. It was a beautiful day and Luke was a very good sport.

Nora Neus, who was married at St. Matthew's, came and talked about her book *Charlottesville and White Supremacy*. She also gave a very adorable workshop to several Girl Scouts.

And we had a very fun auction, with lots of good food provided by parishioners. Two skilled auctioneers Brian and Vytas and we made more money than we thought. A very successful event and a wonderful night of fellowship. We even had parishioners who had moved away show up! A big thank you to the ladies who master planned the event and set it up. Pam Carlson, Eleanor Arnold, Jen Angerame, Anne Newton, Alison Perry, Beth Baker. Terrific ladies!

Andrew has resurrected the Arts at St. Matthew's, bringing lots of talent to our sanctuary. Our choir gave one of the concerts and many of us thought we had never heard them sing so well. Every Sunday they bring magic to the service, and we have come to cherish their voices. Just recently we had another Arts at St. Matthew's event. Michelle Pauker came and sang from the American Song Book. It was a wonderful evening with Andrew doing a pretty cute duet.

And we can't forget we had an adorable pageant, with all our children taking part. Thanks to Jen DeAngelis and Amy Grubner and Alex Sherk for all their invaluable help.

A big thank you to our Altar Guild who is behind the scenes to facilitate the preparation for Marissa at the altar. They are a dedicated group of women who St. Matthew's relies on every Sunday to have everything set, and not many of us know how they work or what they do. We are lucky to have every one of them.

Mission

We continue to support two mission partners, Circle of Care and Open Door. We have collected wallets and purses for Open Door, gifts for the children at Circle of Care, and even helped seniors from Social Services. This parish continues to be faithful and generous to those in need, another example of the big hearts we have for others.

Pastoral Care

Our pastoral care team continues to reach out to those who are shut in. They are a dedicated group who quietly do the work and we are very grateful.

Vestry

We are losing two faithful hard-working members of the Vestry, Pam Carlson, who created and led the Spirited Sisters with Stacey Savas will be stepping off. Pam and Stacey created an opportunity for the women of St. Matthew's to gather and form fellowship, have fun, pray, and just be together. I hope she will continue to lead this group of women who so enjoy the time. Pam also was the one who gave us the auction theme, was pivotal to organizing the committee. I have plans for Pam so am hoping she will still be willing to help in other ways. Paul Reis, who has worn many hats for us on vestry, and stayed on an extra year to help us, is leaving. Paul did and has done many jobs for us, he and Dodo watch over the cemetery, he helped with the oil negotiations for the church. If there is coffee to be bought, Paul always volunteered. He serves on many committees and am hoping he will at least continue that good work.

I would be remiss not to thank my partner Anne Newton, who takes on all the jobs that would make my head spin. We have new and upgraded lighting in the sanctuary thanks to her and Rob Kyle, something I could never have managed. Anne has been a faithful partner and I look forward to working together.

A big thank you to Marissa, Andrew, and Nancy for shouldering more work, making sure the parish runs smoothly. Despite the challenges, they have kept us all engaged, helpful when asked, making sure our needs are addressed or answered. We are very fortunate to have them. Marissa's sermons are thoughtful, bringing new perspectives to the text and helping us with historical context. Our gatherings after the service add more understanding as we dissect Marissa's sermons. We are fortunate to have such a gifted preacher.

We are still an active and faithful parish who are committed to serving others and being present to each other. Even with the challenges we have faced and will continue to face, we are a resilient and faithfully community committed to St. Matthew's and the work. In my report last year, I wrote that I looked forward to what we could build together, and we did build and do many good things this past year. This report is filled with faithful and committed parishioners showing leadership, commitment and doing God's work. We still have work to do if we are going to grow. We need to find a way for young families to be a part of our parish, we need a youth group and a leader who will teach, have fun, and mentor kids. The challenges we all recognized need to be addressed soon . The vestry is working hard to find answers and thinking of ways to help Marissa and the staff. Though we have many challenges I am very proud of the efforts and accomplishments this parish has shown over the last year.

Faithfully submitted,

Pam

Faithfully,

Pam

Warden's Report 2023: Anne Newton

The 2023 year at St. Matt's has brought a good amount of change with it. This week in particular I have found myself reflecting on what Marissa has been saying in the E-News the last few weeks about the Annual Meeting being our opportunity to tell our story. Our story here at St. Matt's is made up of many different sub stories because each one of us is a part of the whole. Where we are in our individual story at any given time has an impact on the St. Matt's story and I think it is important that we respect that impact.

Our 2023 story began with a big change in our Rector's story as Marissa and Lyn welcomed Luke to their family in early February joining big sister Laine. Thankfully we had our friend Linda Spiers with us to weave herself back into our St. Matt's story and lead us through Lent. With Marissa's meticulous planning and organization and Linda's gentle leadership we journeyed through the wilderness and into the glory of the Easter story. In mid-February we got to witness a momentous chapter in the story of one of our own in the ordination to the priesthood of our former intern Meg Stapleton Smith. We were also able to have Meg back with us at St. Matt's a few times participating in the service and with some adult education too. It was lovely to have her back in this new role, to weave herself into our St. Matt's story in a new way. Our Social Justice and Racial Healing group provided us with multiple opportunities to hear the stories of enslaved people and some of their relationships to St. Matt's including John C. Wally (aka Lazarus), our "Witness Stones person." Nora Neus joined us this fall to share her story and the incredible events reflected in her book *24 Hours in Charlottesville*.

Each of us, in our own way, are experiencing changes that impact our individual story. Births, deaths, marriage, divorce, job change or retirement; these all impact our story. That impact may not be immediate but it can't be avoided, nor should it be. Change is inevitable and necessary. Chris Perry spoke movingly in his remarks during Stewardship about how the changes in his story have impacted his relationship with St. Matt's over the years. We have seen the change in the loss of friends from our pews over the years as their individual stories led to moves away from Wilton. We have also seen the impact of spiritual or philosophical differences, some ignited by the emotional toll of COVID, leading to changes in individual stories and ultimately to changes in our St. Matt's story. But changes in individual stories have also brought new friends and families to our pews. It brought Andrew to us from across the pond to be a part of our community and share his incredible talents. It brought us a new Bishop in the Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Mello who we were lucky enough to have with us a few weeks ago when he talked about the change in Jesus' story that occurred that day in the Jordan River when he was baptized by John.

So, where does our story go from here? I think the next step is acknowledging where our individual stories place us now and where those stories come together to write the next chapter in the St. Matt's story. I am an avid reader and there are some stories that are so captivating that I never want to see them end. St. Matt's is part of my heart, part of my family and a huge part of my spiritual journey. It is absolutely a story I don't want to see end but it is a story that I know needs to continue to evolve. How do we individually and as a group accept the challenges of our story? How do we wisely invest in our life at St. Matt's to keep our story moving forward? How do we set a place at the table for everyone so that we can share their stories and make them a part of our St. Matt's story? I look forward to continuing to write our St. Matt's story together in 2024.

Faithfully,
Anne

Director of Music Ministries and Organist 2023

The Music Ministry at St. Matthew's had a busy, rewarding, and exciting 2023. Music remains an integral part of life in our parish, both within worship and outside. I am grateful to work in a community that views music in this way and that strives to support it.

Music spending this year was kept right within budget. To minimize spending, I avoided taking many Sundays off, thus we only needed to hire substitute organists twice this year. Furthermore, I learned how to tune pianos and harpsichords, so that we could have an in-tune instrument for all concerts without incurring multiple expenses. Finally, I avoided purchasing many new music supplies (i.e. music copies), relying almost exclusively on music already in our library and public domain music. My motivation for all of the above was to focus the available budget on employing the choir in as many worship services as possible. I remain deeply grateful to our Church Choir, for their many contributions, dedication, and hard work, both in rehearsals and individually in their own time. We enjoy a joyful and loving community atmosphere, which fuels our musical and ministerial success. I implore any parishioner, if even remotely interested, to join our ranks and come celebrate musical beauty and wonderful fellowship with us.

The year 2023 offered a number of musical opportunities to the parish, and many of you took advantage and participated. In Lent, back in February and March, I presented a series of six Lenten Musical Meditations online. These were 10–15 minute on-screen worship events featuring organ music, plainsong, and chanting. Held over Zoom, we tended to have about 15 worshippers each Tuesday night. That same season, I offered a solo recital just before Holy Week. I played an hour-long program on the harpsichord and organ featuring harpsichord suites by Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre, Johann Sebastian Bach, and organ music by Ethel Smyth, Herbert Howells, and Johann Pachelbel. We are blessed to have the harpsichord at St. Matthew's, a gift of the Gortz family, as well as the organ, of course, a gift of the Brock family.

Holy Week and Easter were a busy time for the Choir and me. We sang a great deal that week, including a Maundy Thursday Eucharist featuring Taizé songs and much Psalm chanting, a Good Friday liturgy with more Psalm chanting and a cappella anthems, and a jubilant Easter morning service. Joined by the fantastic Michael Burnette on the organ, the Choir offered beautiful renditions of *O sons and daughters*, *Haec Dies* (Caspar Ett), and *Worthy is the lamb* (from Handel's *Messiah*). In the latter, the Choir's voices reverberated so beautifully and passionately through the space; a few bars before the end, a measure of rest precedes a long and emphatic "Amen." In that moment of silence, all was still and suspended in the church; one could "hear a pin drop." After communion in the same service, we all joined in singing the Hallelujah Chorus (also from *Messiah*), which added to the communally festive atmosphere.

After concluding the program year on Pentecost with more expert renditions of *Sicut Cervus* (Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina), *Peace I leave with you* (Amy Beach), and *Draw us in the Spirit's tether* (Harold Friedell), the Choir enjoyed a well-deserved summer break. Over the summer we heard hymns and anthems from the Summer Choir. Summer was also when we said goodbye to our beloved Samantha, who was such a significant part of our community at St. Matthew's. The Choir returned in the Fall and has been on top form, ever growing and working ambitiously.

Another return this Fall has been The Arts at St. Matthew's. The three concerts we held in the Fall of 2023 were all well-attended, with about 75 average in the audience. Ryan Young kicked off our season with a stunning fiddle concert with his collaborator, Matt Heaton. They had held workshops in the Wilton schools earlier that week, so we were lucky to welcome some young students into the space for their electric performance. Two subsequent performances in October and November, respectively, were my own solo organ recital and Fauré's Requiem, the first half of the latter featuring further organ music from yours truly. The series continues in 2024 with more exciting events. I am grateful to The Arts at St. Matthew's committee for their help running and publicizing these concerts. I am also grateful to the Vestry for their faithful support of these endeavors.

I count myself very fortunate to make music with you each Sunday, to work with the Choir, collaborate with Marissa and Nancy, and to be a part of your community. Please don't hesitate to be in touch if I can help in any way or you would like to discuss music at St. Matthew's.

Andrew

Altar Guild & Flower Guild 2023

During 2023, 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 Evensong and Taize' services along with baptisms, weddings and funerals / 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 the altar flower arrangements for the 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, Lorena Morales Aparicio, Kimberly Olson, Betsy Pettit, Joy Ruterma

FLOWER COMMITTEE: Jennifer Angerame, Laura Bazarian, Elizabeth Walsh, Kacky Theoharides, Kate Denious, Kathryn Groves, and Lindsay Chaney



Cemetery Committee 2023

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. We would be excited to give anyone a tour – it's very interesting!

This past year was one of learning and maintaining. From an overall standpoint, the cemetery improvements from 2022 are flourishing. The plantings (hollies and ground cover) have matured, and the spring of 2023 was beautiful. The town hall entrance is now both a welcoming and an "obvious" entry point.

We had a number of inquiries but only one interment, that being in the Memorial Garden. The Rev. Linda Spiers officiated in the Garden. The visiting family members (the Hackneys) also enjoyed a tour of the church in which they grew up.

We also had a very interesting inquiry about future plans from Russell Sturges who asked about a plot near some of his family. This led to Paul and Russell walking the cemetery and Paul's discovery of missing information in our maps of the Fitch addition to the cemetery. For our own information, Russell has also sent us a copy of his family's history which we will study in 2024 to see how we can best use it. This is copy is a permanent donation to St. Matthew's.

Physically, the cemetery, while overall in good shape, has its challenges. The downed branches and limbs were cleared in the spring and during the year as needed. However, in the early summer we found the beginning of a knotweed infestation. A plan to address this in the fall was halted by the rain, but we will address this in the spring of 2024. We will also lay out a plan for the use of the new ring of the Memorial Garden.

Fiscally the year highlights our challenge. Our opening balance was \$22,641. Our income was \$1,800 from the internment and our landscaping expenses were \$6,550, for a loss of \$4,750. At this rate each year we would deplete our funds is less than 4 years. We do have the additional one-time donation of \$10,000 from the Hapke family in January 2023 which we had envisioned might be used for a special improvement to the cemetery, but for now will be a placeholder in the operational budget.

In 2023 we gathered information on other cemetery's pricing. While pricing models vary, the end results are almost the same. In 2024 will be joining an association to see how other small cemeteries are working in the same situation. Hillside Cemetery in Wilton is much bigger than we are, with a manager, budget, and outreach (as seen in Good Morning Wilton). This year we will call on the Committee for ideas to create a 3-year plan to raise our visibility within both the community and parish, and to provide for the Cemetery's long-term financial stability. Given our history and location, our opportunities are wide open.

We look forward to the coming year.

Dodo Roberts & Paul Reis, Co-chairs

Endowment Investment Committee 2023

The following is an update from the St. Matthew's Endowment Investment Committee. As of December 31, 2023, the account balance (at Vanguard) of The Endowment Fund of St. Matthew's Parish totaled, \$3,720,929. This account balance plus the mortgage bond of \$696,308 brings the total Endowment Fund to \$4,417,237. The prior year-end balance was \$3,917,773.

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. After significant changes in 2022 to banking and investment relationships, 2023 saw some return to normalcy with our new banking relationship at Chase and our restructured account relationship at Vanguard. This has resulted again in consistent mortgage payments by the church and consistent Endowment distributions to the church. As of 12/31/23, all mortgage payments are current and on schedule while the outstanding mortgage balance is \$696,308. 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 4 % of the three-year trailing average market value (\$4,106,290) 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. During 2023, the Endowment Fund distributions totaled \$165,000 to the St. Matthew's operating account. Based on the current 9/30/23 calculation (new 3-yr avg of \$4,050,050), the Endowment contribution to St. Matthew's for 2024 will be slightly reduced to \$163,000.

The committee continues to oversee the investments held at Vanguard in a predominantly growth-oriented equity portfolio. This account is managed in conjunction with our ~\$700K 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. There was an additional gift received to the Endowment this past summer from a generous donation of a life insurance policy from the estate of long-time parishioner, Bob Harleman, who passed earlier in 2023. Bob's gift and others like it will continue to 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 2023

[Education for Ministry](#) (EfM) is a four-year program in group reflection and study to support formation for Christian ministry in daily life. 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 has an active group of eight individuals from five congregations: St. Matthew's (Eleanor Arnold, Jean Campbell, Pam Ely, and Char Griffin); Christ & Holy Trinity, Westport; St. John's, New Milford; St. Thomas' in Bethel; and St. Luke's, Darien. To kick-off a new year, we held a day retreat at Transfiguration Lodge at Camp Washington. For the 2023-2024 academic year, our study has focused on the Hebrew Scriptures (Year 1), Christian Testament (Year 2), and Theology and Interfaith Expressions (Year 4).

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 and ethics. EfM also explores a wider concept of ministry, based as it is in an understanding that baptism, the fundamental rite of entry into Christianity, marks our call to minister to one another in Christ's name during our daily lives. This year's theme has been focused on living a spiritually mature life.

We meet via Zoom on Mondays from 7:00-9:15pm beginning with prayer, followed by discussion of our weekly reading assignment, theological reflection, and closing with prayer. Examining life through a theological lens is the central discipline in Education for Ministry. We do this by looking at our life experiences (Experience/Action), the world/society around us (Culture), and our cherished beliefs and values (Position) all alongside the Christian tradition that has been passed down through the centuries.

In the spring of 2024, we will invite members of St. Matt's (and surrounding parishes) to discern whether EfM is of interest – perhaps YOU are being called to join us?! In June 2024 we will be celebrating the “graduation” of Pam, Jean, and Char who will have completed four years of EfM – a BIG accomplishment! 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 be a mentor at St. Matthew's in this amazing program of theological reflection.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Ely Pearson
sharonepearson@gmail.com
203-984-1228

Liturgical Assistants 2023

Liturgy is “work of the people” and it takes many individuals to make our worship come alive with many leaders. In 2023 we temporarily discontinued acolytes serving – not because we don’t need them – but our numbers can’t sustain a robust rota each week. Hopefully new youth will show an interest in the future. Lectors (all who can read are welcome) read the Old Testament and New Testament lessons and lead the Prayers of the People. Eucharistic Ministers assist in many ways in our services, taking on the acolyte role and serving the wine at communion. I am grateful to all those who continue to offer their voices and intentionality as we join in worship together. If you feel called to join this “cloud of voices” and assistants at our altar, please feel free to get in touch: sharonepearson@gmail.com or 203-984-1228.

Acolytes

Lily Cristini
Douglas and Mikey Gubner
Charlotte and John Mannix

Lectors

Brian Angerame
Lorena Morales Aparicio
Beth Baker
Jean Campbell
Andrew Leslie Cooper
Caroline DeAngelis
Adair Garis
Amy Gubner
Vytas Kisielius
Janet Nobles
Mary Obermayer
John Pearson
Sharon Pearson
Chris Perry
Anna-Kate Reis
Paul Reis
Stacey Savas

Eucharistic Ministers

Beth Baker
Bill Brautigam
Pam Ely
Vytas Kisielius
Anne Newton
Sharon Pearson

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Ely Pearson

Social Justice & Racial Healing 2023

Becoming Beloved Community is The Episcopal Church's long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice in our personal lives, our ministries, and our community. St. Matthew's is an active member of ECCT'S Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation Ministry Network and we meet the monthly as the Social Justice and Racial Healing group. We dream and work to live out our baptismal promises where all people may experience dignity and abundant life and see themselves and others as beloved children of God. In 2023 we:

- began each meeting with "Dwelling in the Word" Bible study
- continued to offer a different prayer following the *Prayers of the People* each Sunday; it is also shared over St. Matthew's social media platforms on Monday mornings
- shared quotes from Black theological leaders weekly during Black History Month on social media platforms
- hosted Dr. Julie Hughes and the Rev. Meg Stapleton Smith in an Adult Forum in which we learned of research regarding slavery in Wilton grounded in our Baptismal Covenant (January)
- participated in the Absalom Jones Celebration at St. Monica's Episcopal Church in Hartford (February)
- designed, wrote reflections, and led an experiential Good Friday Stations of the Cross liturgy based on social justice using the Robert Natkin images in the sanctuary (March)
- participated in the Interfaith Service Day on the New Haven Green (St. Matthew's was a sponsor (August)
- participated in the following adult forums:
 - retired Bishop Jim Curry: Swords to Plowshares – turning guns into tools for gardening (June)
 - the "all-parish read" of *Braiding Sweetgrass* and the three-part forum on its theological themes and its environmental message tied to our Christian tradition and witness (September)
 - Nora Neus: Charlottesville & White Supremacy (October)
 - The Rev. Canon Ranjit Matthew: current ECCT Canon for Racial Justice, Reconciliation, and Healing etc. (November)
- discussed resolutions put forth from ECCT's annual convention on topics related to social justice and how St. Matthew's is living into those imperatives
- took a field trip to visit The Institute for American Indian Studies in Washington, CT (November).

A major focus in 2023 was the implementation of **The Witness Stones Project**. With two youth from St. Matthew's and a group from the Unitarian Congregation in Westport, Becky Hudspeth and Sharon Pearson used local primary and secondary documents to learn about local slavery, investigate individual enslaved persons, and restore the history of the enslaved. This culminated in a Witness Stones Ceremony to honor John C. Wally, a freed Wilton slave who contributed greatly to St. Matthew's as well as the Wilton community on June 10, 2023. His Witness Stone is located at the Wilton Historical Society. A full description can be found on our website: <https://www.stmatthewswilton.org/the-witness-stones-project/>. Please see our additional report about St. Matthew's early history regarding slavery.

On January 27, 2024 we visited the Norwalk's 1835 Town House Museum at Historic Mill Hill Park to view the exhibit of Indigenous Peoples of Norwalk as well as other historical exhibits in which Wilton is also noted. Some of the hopes for 2024 will be to focus on the Indigenous Peoples of Norwalk/Wilton, a land acknowledgment, and creation care.

All are welcome to join us the 1st Wednesday of every month from 7:30-9:00pm (zoom).

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Abrams

Eleanor Arnold

Pam Ely

Becky Hudspeth

Paul Reis

Marissa Rohrbach

Sharon Pearson, convenor

WEPCO's Annual Report for 2023

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 which include the outdoor grounds and all indoor spaces except for the two 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.

In 2023 WEPCO moved to a 2-part time sexton structure which has been quite effective. The interim Facility Director was replaced by a permanent part time WEPCO Director who is closely aligned with the needs of the churches, renters, and the community at large. We also transitioned from utilizing a volunteer financial professional, Bill Brautigam (a St Matthews parishioner) as our treasurer to a recommended financial consulting professional, Susan Wilson, Avalon Financial Consulting LLC. Bill was instrumental in guiding and supporting us through this transition. We are extremely grateful for Bill's meticulous management of WEPCO financials along with his loyal service.

WEPCO would also like to acknowledge Steve Connor (Co-Pres.), Tom Carlson (Co-Pres.) and Chip Newton (Secretary) who also retired early in 2023 after completion of their terms. All three provided great energy and dedication to their roles leading WEPCO through some challenging years of COVID lockdowns and re-openings while also supporting major capital projects and WEPCO staff transitions. WEPCO heads into 2024 in a stronger position because of their tireless efforts through some tough times. Thank you, Steve, Tom and Chip!

Financially, WEPCO continues to remain diligent about monitoring all operating expenses. In addition to the \$20,000 total operating capital approved by both churches annually, WEPCO relies on rental income through contracted renters (Belden Hill Montessori, Kiwanis, Wilton Singers, and several AA – A New Life groups) as well as one-off rentals from groups within Wilton and the surrounding areas.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Non-Operating Capital: In 2023, WEPCO completed a Phase Two campus security project which included changing keys on all external perimeter doors and installing card reader technology to the St. Matthews circular door entrance as well as the glass doors entering Wilton Presbyterian Gathering space. The exterior door leading to both churches offices had a card reader installed during Security Phase One. For additional security, an intercom was added at the church door entrance. All unauthorized visitors are now required to ring the bell, and an office administrator or WEPCO director will identify visitors prior to allowing entrance.

The budget for this initiative was \$44,000, and \$41,409 was spent.

Operating Capital: In 2023, WEPCO completed three major initiatives to enhance the campus.

The Courtyard entrance project which included a large-scale rewiring of electrical underground cables and the installation of 4 new lampposts to the walkway. Several Bollard lights were rewired by sextons.

The Campus Brushing and Clearing project was an effort to clean up and beautify the campus. There was extensive overgrowth and much of this work hadn't been done in many years due to limited participation on clean up days. WEPCO will continue to oversee the maintenance of this work moving through the seasons.

The Lower Core project is ongoing. After the ABILIS rental contract was terminated, the carpet was removed, and work began to determine the most appropriate floor covering material. In the interim, a water issue was discovered and is currently being addressed before the floor is covered. The intent is to get this space rental ready as quickly as possible.

OTHER

Burns construction, the contractor for the Route 123 piping initiative, has agreed to renew their lease with WEPCO for another year. 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 Fall 2023 Clean-Up Days were successful, but we still need to continue to encourage parishioners to join the Boy Scout troop in this tremendous effort of maintaining our beautiful campus.

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

2023 Board Officers and Members:

Mark Montgomery	Pastor, Wilton Presbyterian Church
Marissa Rohrbach	Rector, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
Secretary:	Tim Cummins
Other Voting members:	Andy Driver, Tim Cummins, Ed MacEwen, Chris Perry, Pam Ely
Director:	Donna Savage
Sextons:	Alix Williams, Jairo Mejia

Finance Committee 2023

Greetings Friends,

I would like to thank the Finance Committee for their continued faithful service to St. Matthew's. I would also like to thank our Treasurer, Rob Kyle, specifically. If you have never served on our Finance Committee before, it will be difficult for you to imagine how much the Treasurer does for us on a day-to-day and month-to-month basis. He, like Keith DeAngelis before him, commits an incredible amount of their time and talent to the benefit of our church. Please thank Rob when you get a chance.

This past year was a difficult year for St. Matthew's from a financial perspective. We are still hampered by the loss of many financial givers who left us during Covid. Marissa, our staff, and our many lay leaders are working hard to bring new faces to St. Matthew's, but we have not yet made up for the loss of the many pledgers. In the meantime, the Finance Committee and the Vestry continue to steward St. Matthew's finances conservatively to best fit our current financial reality.

We knew going into 2023 we would have some financial challenges. You will remember that we entered the year with an untenable budgeted loss of approximately \$220,000. During the year, we were also forced to absorb an unexpected pension expense of \$13,000. Marissa, the Vestry, and the Finance Committee were committed to do everything in their power to raise revenues and limit expenses.

The good news is that our fellow parishioners rose to the challenge and increased their stewardship giving and other gifts to St. Matthew's, as well their support of our annual auction. Pledge and plate donations came in approximately \$12,000 above budget, non-pledge donations came in \$55,000 above budget, and net proceeds from the auction came in over \$12,000 above budget. At the same time, your leadership kept a sharp eye on all other expenses and limited them as best they could. We also did not replace our Christian Education Director who left during the year.

As a result of the belt tightening and generous giving of your fellow parishioners, we ended the year with an actual loss of roughly \$124,000, almost \$100,000 less than the loss budgeted a year ago.

From a cash flow perspective, St. Matthew's roughly broke even. The distribution from our endowment fund was approximately \$165,000. The proceeds of that distribution almost exactly matched the sum of our loss for the year, mission gifts, payments to the endowment for mortgage principal and the cost of the last phase of our security system installation.

The 2023 and 2024 budgets do not reflect who we want to be, nor do they reflect a sustainable path for St. Matthew's. We had 55 pledging families in 2023 who, with the non-pledge givers and auction donors, gave almost \$480,000 in support of God and St. Matthew's. However, even with significant belt tightening and without replacing our Christian Ed Director, it costs about \$50,000 a month, or \$600,000 a year, to run St. Matthew's. Yes, we are blessed with the incredible gift of our endowment fund but using it to fund a \$120,000 operating loss is probably not what we all want for St. Matthew's.

The Finance Committee, the Vestry, and Marissa have trimmed the operating expenses of St. Matthew's down to a bare minimum. Give a quick glance at our budget and you will see we basically only spend money on our parish administrator, rector, choirmaster, some computer and copier expenses, WEPCO (heat, A/C, electricity and insurance), and bookkeeping. That's it. The Vestry is busy working on what Christian Education will look like. I don't believe this is who we want to be. I also don't imagine that we all want our endowment distribution to be funding bookkeeping and electricity. We, and God, have bigger plans for St. Matthew's. You can help.

In fact, there are lots of ways you can help in support of St. Matthew's. Help us reach out to the hundreds of families who have moved to town over the past four years. Many of them don't know enough about St. Matthew's to want to make room in their lives for the great things going on here. Reach out to the folks you haven't seen in while and encourage them to come. If you haven't pledged yet for 2024, please do. Bring some friends to The Arts at St. Matthew's. Join the St. Matt's Spirited Sisters. Stay after church for a brief but deeper discussion about the sermon and scriptures. Join the choir. Teach church school. Ask Pam, Anne and Marissa how you can help.

Friends, the budget deficits we are running are not sustainable, but we can do this. The Finance Committee and our leadership will keep expenses to a minimum, and we will use the annual draw from our endowment draw if we must. But we need your help to grow St. Matthew's again! As always, thank you for being you.

Faithfully,
Brian Angerame
Finance Committee Chair

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

2024 Summary Budget

	2023 Budget	2023 Act	2024 Budget	'24Bgt vs '23Bgt	'24Bgt vs '23Act
Income					
Pledge Receipts	\$331,346	\$341,521	\$307,106	(\$24,240)	(\$34,415)
Plate Donations	5,000	6,253	5,000	-	(1,253)
Other Donations	30,000	85,598	40,000	10,000	(45,598)
Net Auction	32,500	44,873	37,500	5,000	(7,373)
Other Income	5,000	1,164	250	(4,750)	(914)
Total Income	\$403,846	\$479,410	\$389,856	(\$13,990)	(\$89,554)
Expense					
Administrative	37,996	39,753	39,401	1,406	(352)
Cemetery	2,500	2,500	2,500	-	-
Christian Ed	79,039	44,781	39,195	(39,844)	(5,586)
Clergy	197,888	197,697	192,214	(5,674)	(5,484)
Common Mission	57,050	57,050	55,033	(2,017)	(2,017)
Fellowship	2,300	4,104	6,750	4,450	2,646
Mortgage Interest	21,318	21,318	20,512	(806)	(805)
Music	111,182	113,385	120,540	9,358	7,155
Office	18,064	16,123	17,245	(819)	1,122
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Payroll	750	131	200	(550)	69
Plant	72,698	71,623	75,068	2,370	3,445
Professional Fees	20,000	18,892	20,400	400	1,508
Tech	10,710	10,826	15,004	4,294	4,177
Worship	2,000	889	1,250	(750)	361
Youth	5,450	4,389	1,750	(3,700)	(2,639)
Total Expense	\$638,944	\$603,462	\$607,063	(\$31,881)	\$3,600
Net Operating Income	<u>(\$235,098)</u>	<u>(\$124,052)</u>	<u>(\$217,207)</u>	<u>\$17,891</u>	<u>(\$93,155)</u>
TRANSFERS					
Endowment Distribtn	165,000	165,000	163,000	(2,000)	(2,000)
Mission	(5,000)	(5,000)	(12,000)	(7,000)	(7,000)
Mortgage Principal	-	(26,128)	(27,705)	(27,705)	(1,577)
Capital	-	-	-	-	-
Unallocated	(160,000)	(133,872)	(123,295)	36,705	10,577
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-
CASH SURPLUS/DEFICIT	<u>(\$235,098)</u>	<u>(\$124,052)</u>	<u>(\$217,207)</u>	<u>\$17,891</u>	<u>(\$93,155)</u>

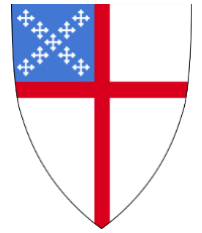
St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
Balance Sheet

As of 12/31/22 and 12/31/23

	<u>Dec 31, 23</u>	<u>Dec 31, 22</u>	<u>Change</u>
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Total Checking/Savings	\$416,463	\$445,086	(\$28,623)
Other Current Assets			
Other Receivable	696,308	722,436	(26,128)
Total Other Current Assets	<u>696,308</u>	<u>722,436</u>	(26,128)
Total Current Assets	1,112,771	1,167,522	(54,751)
Other Assets			
Collections	14,450	14,450	0
Endowment Life insurance	22,890	78,818	(55,927)
Investments	3,720,929	3,195,337	525,592
Total Other Assets	<u>3,758,269</u>	<u>3,288,605</u>	469,664
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$4,871,040</u>	<u>\$4,456,126</u>	\$414,914
LIABILITIES & EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable			
Accounts Payable	9,642	11,447	(1,806)
Total Accounts Payable	<u>9,642</u>	<u>11,447</u>	(1,806)
Other Current Liabilities			
Organ Donation Fund	11,746	14,058	(2,313)
Altar Guild Fund	463	263	200
Arts of St. Matthews Fund	14,164	9,100	5,064
Capital Reserve Fund	136,154	192,987	(56,833)
Cemetery Fund	27,892	22,642	5,250
Discretionary Funds	7,118	9,148	(2,031)
Flower Fund	9,284	8,160	1,123
Ian Harleman Memorial Fund	35,306	35,306	0
Memorial Fund	22,132	22,032	100
Music Fund	6,642	9,342	(2,700)
Mission Reserve Fund	0	8,419	(8,419)
Youth Fund	1,105	1,105	0
Copier Deposit	3,137	3,137	0
Payroll Liabilities	2,655	8,527	(5,872)
Prepaid Pledges	71,560	66,502	5,058
Total Other Current Liabilities	<u>349,357</u>	<u>410,729</u>	(61,372)
Total Current Liabilities	358,998	422,176	(63,178)
Long Term Liabilities			
Endowment Mortgage			
	696,308	722,436	(26,128)
Total Long Term Liabilities	<u>696,308</u>	<u>722,436</u>	(26,128)
Total Liabilities	1,055,306	1,144,612	(89,306)
Equity			
Fund Balance	3,306,514	4,051,437	(744,922)
Net Income	509,219	(739,922)	1,249,142
Total Equity	<u>3,815,734</u>	<u>3,311,514</u>	504,219
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>\$4,871,040</u>	<u>\$4,456,126</u>	\$414,914

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 for friends and members of all ages.

Staff

Rector	The Rev. Marissa S. Rohrbach, marissa@stmatthewswilton.org
Music Ministries & Organist	Andrew Leslie Cooper, andrew@stmatthewswilton.org
Parish Administrator	Nancy Johnson, office@stmatthewswilton.org
Director of WEPCO	Donna Savage, wepco@optonline.net
Bookkeeper	Louann Miska, louann.miska@gmail.com
Media Technician	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	Paul Reis
Pam Carlson		

36 New Canaan Road, Wilton, CT 06897

Phone: (203) 762-7400

www.stmatthewswilton.org

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