

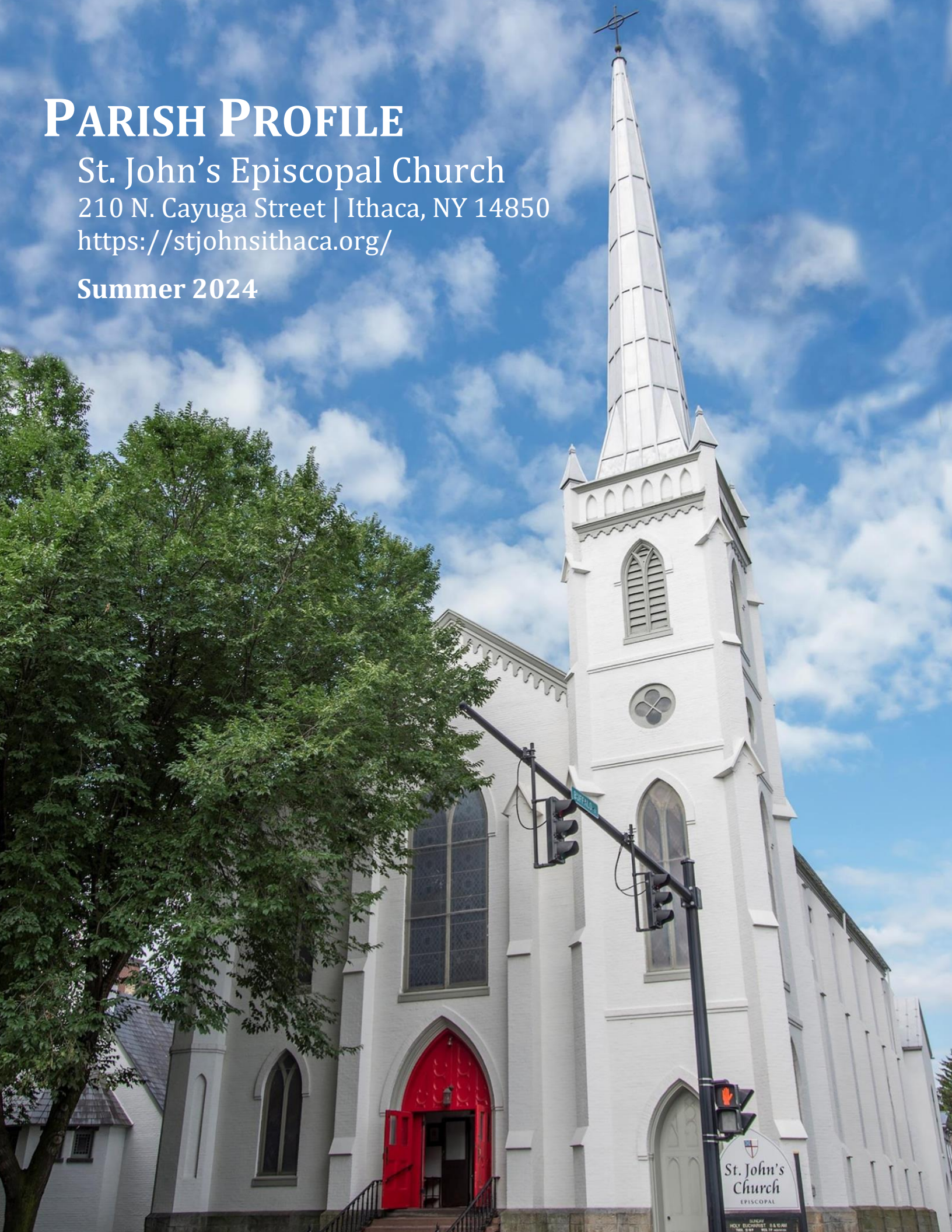
PARISH PROFILE

St. John's Episcopal Church

210 N. Cayuga Street | Ithaca, NY 14850

<https://stjohnsithaca.org/>

Summer 2024



St. John's
Church
EPISCOPAL

SUNDAY
HOLY EUCARIST 8 & 10 AM
9:30 - 11 AM
11:30 - 12:30 PM

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What We Seek in a Rector

St. John's is a welcoming and inclusive parish and Jubilee Center in the heart of downtown Ithaca, New York, also home to Cornell University and Ithaca College.

We seek a faithful pastor with integrity and a deep spirituality who will care for God's people at St. John's and equip us for our ministries (BCP, p. 818). We look to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in calling a minister to St. John's who will embrace us and our faith community as we practice fellowship and celebrate the sacraments, will minister to us as we "are wearied by the changes and chances of this life" (BCP, p. 133), and will honor inclusiveness and diversity. Our deep longing is for a spiritual leader whose life reflects God's teachings on a spiritual journey that can join with ours.

Specifically, we seek the movement of the Holy Spirit in guiding our search process toward a person with these qualities:



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- **Thoughtful and inspiring preacher**, who delivers thought-provoking and spiritually nourishing sermons that deepen our understanding of God and ourselves.
- **Worship leader** who enables us to connect personally and corporately with God through scripture, music, and traditional and contemporary forms of worship.
 - **Channel of God's grace and mercy through pastoral care** and spiritual support to parishioners and others in times of need, responding with empathy first and words second.
 - **Lover of scripture** who inspires us to study and fall in love with the Word of God.
 - **Person of prayer** who enkindles personal and collective prayer practices among parishioners.
 - **Spiritual guide** with a sense of humor who enables us to find joy in our faith, embrace our flaws, and work through difficult subjects or feelings.
- **Genuine, warm, compassionate, welcoming, and hospitable servant leader.**
 - **Champion** for diversity, inclusion, and our LGBTQIA+ friends, families, and loved ones; who is committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment for people of color, the poor, people with disabilities, and people struggling with health issues or substance use.
 - **Learner** who is introspective, adaptable, and eager to stretch personally.
 - **Listener** who is attentive, truthful, and maintains confidentiality.
 - **Peacemaker, healer, and reconciler** who manages conflicts as opportunities for personal growth, community building, and learning.
- **Community leader** who seeks to understand the "moving parts" of the parish and stands at the hub of our community, drawing people in, building involvement in the broader community, and encouraging parishioners, ministries, and new ideas.
 - **Advocate** for the guests of Loaves & Fishes, (the largest Community Kitchen and Advocacy Program in Tompkins County), and model of joyful service and table fellowship at Loaves & Fishes.
 - **Energizer** of our Jubilee Ministry who catalyzes engagement and action by parishioners.
 - **Spark plug** for evangelism and mission beyond St. John's doors.
 - **Steward** who understands and facilitates the maintenance of our historic building, including imagining creative possibilities for it.
- **Manager** with collaborative and supervisory skills, who practices participatory and transparent decision-making, and empowers individuals, small groups, and the church staff (a Music Director, Office Administrator, and Weekday Sexton).

We look forward to weaving together our sense of St. John's future with a new rector's gifts and passions, to plan our course of mission together.

Our Community

Ithaca, New York

Located at the base of Cayuga Lake in the Finger Lakes Region of New York, Ithaca is the largest municipality and county seat of Tompkins County and is just a four-hour drive from New York City. Ithaca is known for its beautiful scenery, excellent wines and food, Farmer's Market, art galleries, theaters, and close-knit community. Within a ten-mile radius of Ithaca, 150 waterfalls offer breathtaking views, including the 215-foot Taughannock Falls (55 feet higher than Niagara Falls). The popular local saying, "Ithaca is Gorges," aptly describes the city's deep-cut gorges and spectacular waterfalls. Click/tap the link to see a [map of Ithaca's historic downtown district](#) that shows the location of DeWitt Park, shops, homes, St. John's Episcopal Church, and numerous other churches.

Ithaca exemplifies a friendly, small-city atmosphere while showcasing many of the fast-paced qualities of a larger metropolitan area. Home to [Cornell University](#), [Ithaca College](#), and nearby [Tompkins Cortland Community College](#), Ithaca is strongly influenced by its thriving academic community. Ithaca offers historic neighborhoods, liberal social services, and a passion for welcoming and celebrating all persons, including the LGBTQIA+ community. In 2013, Ithaca ranked number one as Lumosity.com's Smartest City in America.

Tompkins County



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Tompkins County is 476 square miles in the heart of upstate New York. The county population in 2020 was 105,740 and according to 2024 labor data Tompkins County has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the state at 3.4%. (click/tap the link to see [Department of Labor Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#)).

The climate of the area provides for a variety of year-round outdoor activities. Ithacans host many well-attended themed festivals throughout the year. There are numerous local farms creating a marvelous supply of farm-fresh produce, cheeses, wines, and natural craftsmanship.

There are six school districts in Tompkins County, with over 5,000 students in the [Ithaca City School District](#) (ICSD) alone. ICSD includes eight elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, and a middle/high alternative community school. [BOCES](#) offers classes and programs for children and adults, including special education programs.

Click/tap the link to see a list of the [five private schools and numerous preschools and childcare providers](#) in the county.

For more information on Ithaca's agriculture, business and health care, recreation, tourism, and transportation, click/tap the link to visit the [Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce](#) website.

Our Diocese

The [Diocese of Central New York](#) (DCNY) was established in 1868 and includes 14 counties. There are 81 distinct congregations, five chapels, one outreach mission, and one college chaplaincy. The congregations are clustered into nine districts, each overseen by a dean appointed by the bishop. There are over 13,000 Episcopalians who worship in 82 congregations in DCNY.

The diocesan office is in the center of the diocese in Liverpool, a suburb of Syracuse, New York. In addition to the bishop, seven staff members serve the diocese in a variety of capacities.

The diocese provides support, guidance, and assistance to parishes in a variety of ways, including the following:

- **Spiritual:** Providing companionship along our Christian journeys and offering safe spaces to deepen spirituality.
- **Outreach:** Inviting us to lovingly seek and serve our neighbors near and far, including the Diocese of El Salvador (the companion diocese to DCNY), the Ephphatha Mission Church of the Deaf, and Jubilee Centers for hands-on local community outreach.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe was elected 11th bishop and the first female bishop of DCNY on August 6, 2016. She succeeded Bishop Gladstone B. “Skip” Adams III, who served DCNY for over 15 years. The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe was consecrated on December 3, 2016.

Our Beloved Church Home

A beacon of light and a symbol of God's love stands majestically at 210 N. Cayuga Street in Ithaca, New York. Named after St. John, an apostle, author, fisherman, and beloved friend of Jesus, [St. John's Episcopal Church](#) has stood proudly on this site for 157 years. An Episcopal society was first formed in the Village of Ithaca in 1822, and its first church building was completed in 1824. In 1859, the original church structure was torn down, and the next year, a new and larger church was completed on the current site. Its Gothic style, brilliant white façade, and vibrant red front doors are striking, and create an easy landmark to find in Ithaca. The church stands at the intersection of North Cayuga Street and Buffalo Street in [downtown Ithaca](#).



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The history of leadership at St. John's is rich. There have been 23 rectors since the formation of St. John's in 1822. Beginning in 1911, most presiding rectors served for 15 years or more. We believe this distinction highlights the stability of St. John's and the commitment of clergy, parishioners, and community members to support an Episcopal church in Ithaca.

There is a strong sense of community at St. John's. Love and care for others is a central theme. Parishioners give their time, talents, and resources to help church family members, address many needs in the greater Ithaca community, and participate in various ministries of the church. Parish special activities are well attended, and parishioners eagerly offer their assistance. Special care is given to welcoming visitors and new members to the church. There is obvious enjoyment in being able to greet one another in love during the Peace offering and at coffee hour after services.



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Parishioners at St. John's reflect the rich diversity of the Ithaca and Tompkins County communities. Specifically, this includes cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, physical, and developmental abilities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. St. John's welcomes and embraces this diversity in various thoughtful and intentional ways. We are blessed with a unique mix of parishioners, including undergraduate and graduate students from the colleges and universities in our community. We thank God for blessing us with such a variety of experiences and perspectives to address the diverse needs of our community.

We give thanks that our well-built and much-loved church facility stands on a firm foundation. The church facility includes a large



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nave and chancel, a large parish hall, a rector's office, a choir room, a children's chapel, the church office, several multi-purpose rooms, a commercial kitchen, and a parking lot directly behind the church. Due to the age of the church, several areas of the physical plant need repair, renovation, and replacement. In 2014, a successful capital campaign was launched to address issues vital to the well-being of our beautiful historic church. In the past few years, many of our planned capital improvements have been completed (click/tap the link to see "[Capital Campaign Progress](#)"). We praise God for blessing us with the resources and talents to be good stewards of our beloved church home.

Our Ministries

Inspired by our worship experiences, St. John's parishioners minister to the larger community. Our church is in the center of the Ithaca community, which allows us to have a central role in community service. For over 40 years, St. John's has hosted [Loaves and Fishes of Tompkins County](#) (see also the [Loaves and Fishes Facebook Page](#)), which provides a place for free meals, hospitality, companionship, and advocacy for those in need, regardless of their faith, beliefs, or circumstances, where "All Are Welcome". This ministry began in 1983 and has served over 1.5 million meals in that time. Loaves and Fishes serves people who may be homeless, living in poverty, living with substance use or mental health issues, or lacking connections to family, friends, and resources. The needs of these vulnerable community members and the ways they sometimes manifest can be challenging, so providing understanding, compassion, and grace are just as important as providing the meal. Loaves and Fishes offers three lunches and two dinners per week. Additionally, Loaves and Fishes also utilizes a small office space in the church and occasionally uses other meeting space in the church. For a comprehensive description of Loaves and Fishes and its history, click/tap the link [Ithaca Times Article](#). Please also see the [summary of ministry done by Loaves and Fishes](#) written by the Loaves and Fishes director, Christina Culver.



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The clergy and lay leadership of St. John's works collaboratively with Loaves and Fishes: the church offers the space free of charge and supplements the costs of the utilities used by Loaves and Fishes. The rector and staff work jointly with the Loaves and Fishes staff to address and resolve equipment and facility maintenance issues. Occasionally, they may also work together to proactively resolve issues with guests attending meals. The rector has regular contact with Loaves and Fishes staff members and guests and is the most visible and present representative of St. John's.

The Dignity Pantry and Laundry Love follow in the tradition of Loaves and Fishes. For those in need, Laundry Love provides clothes washing and drying services, and the Dignity Pantry gives away personal hygiene supplies. Also, St. John's teams up with other houses of worship in [Area Congregations Together](#) (ACT), which supports Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard, a food and care items pantry for community members, and [Ithaca MobilePack/Feed My Starving Children](#), an international feeding program. St. John's also hosts a weekly Alcoholics Anonymous group meeting and hosts other community meetings on an as-needed basis.

St. John's has many traditional missions like Sunday services, contemplative prayer services, and Christmas and Holy Week services. There are also special activities integrated into these missions including Godly Play and the Giving Tree. The Altar Guild adorns our church. Our music ministry includes a chancel choir, bell choir, and special instrumental performances and following the service, our hospitality ministry welcomes worshipers to meet and share fellowship. St. John's encourages and supports local parishioners who are answering the call to discernment and also provides placement for interns from other churches.

St. John's enriches the lives of parishioners with Education for Ministry (EfM) groups including parishioners, students and faculty from the Episcopal Church at Cornell, and Christians from other local congregations. For more information about EfM, see <https://efm.sewanee.edu/>. During Lent, parishioners participate in Lenten Study programs to deepen our devotion to Christ and respond to Christ's call to serve. Our pastoral care ministry serves ill and elderly members of the congregation.

In June of 2001, St. John's was declared a [Jubilee Center](#) by the Episcopal Church, honoring the work of the church with Loaves and Fishes and the education classes for adults with special needs. Unfortunately, some worthwhile missions were abandoned during COVID-19 or the times between rectors, but we would love to return to the [Episcopal Peace Fellowship](#), [Dress a Girl Around the World](#), a Sunday education class for adults with special needs, the Blessing of the Pets, and a more vibrant offering for youth engagement.

Our Finances

"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." I Corinthians, 4:1-2, English Standard Version

St. John's Ithaca is a vibrant Type III parish in the Diocese of Central New York. This classification is based on index values for communicants in good standing (203), average Sunday attendance (66), and normal operating income (\$307,192). We follow or exceed diocesan guidance for clergy compensation as a Type III parish.

Over the past ten years, our parochial reports document decreases in the number of communicants and in Sunday attendance. The reports also show that the number of pledging units has decreased slightly.

Two major capital campaigns were completed at St. John's. The 2014 campaign raised \$1,025,650 in pledges from 82 parishioners. Donations from this capital campaign were applied to support improvements and repairs to our historic building. Many of the capital improvements also benefit our partners and guests in the Loaves and Fishes program. The previous capital campaign is managed as an endowment fund (Heritage Fund, currently valued at

\$1,236,724), along with another endowment fund (IMA Fund, currently valued at \$1,114,068). Interest from the endowment has been applied to supplement the operating budget.

The Vestry at St. John's and the treasurer have addressed a budget deficit issue and the use of endowment interest to supplement operating expenses. Our investment advisors and guidance from the National Church led the Vestry to align our Christian beliefs with our St. John's financial needs. Effective 2025 the draw on both of our investment accounts will be 4% of a 5-year rolling average. Planning for a sustainable financial future, we seek a rector who will work with us to expand and enliven a year-round stewardship program so that pledge and plate income covers more of our operating expenses and programs can be expanded to minister more effectively in our zip code and beyond. Click/tap the link to see our [2023 Annual Financial Report](#).

St. John's is offering an attractive compensation package for a full-time rector that includes health coverage for the whole family if needed. We follow diocesan requirements for continuing education and sabbatical leave. Reimbursement is available for mileage and other clergy expenses.

Our Search for a New Rector

The Search Committee

In March 2024, the St. John's Vestry commissioned a group of seven parishioners as the Rector Search Committee: Michael Roman (Chair), Jen Dodwell, Gwen Freeman, Alan Mata, Melinda Oakes, Craig Small, and Lillian Wright. *The search committee members also have had a wide range of journeys that have led them to claim St. John's as their spiritual home. To see more about this group, click/tap the link ["How I Came to St. John's"](#).*

The Parish Self-Study

The search committee first set out to review the 2016/2017 Self-Study and Parish Profile, to revisit the valuable insights collected from the congregation and affiliated groups by the previous search committees. Next, the committee created a survey, which was shared with the congregation. The committee has made it a priority to glean as many perspectives as possible about this parish.

2024 Survey

The [2024 Rector Search Survey](#) (click/tap the link for a summary of the results) covered a few main areas: what parishioners value most in St. John's, the most important aspects of worship, what parishioners hope the future rector will bring as a leader and what their focus will become. The survey was primarily collected online. Paper surveys were also made available, and parishioners were invited to share feedback with search committee members during informal listen-and-learn sessions after the Sunday services. The survey was available for just over two weeks and received 53 responses. Committee members also interviewed several Loaves and Fishes staff and clients to get their perspectives.



St. John's search committee members.

Back row (left to right)

Alan Mata, Gwen Freeman, Melinda Oakes.

Front row (left to right)

Craig Small, Michael Roman, Jennifer Dodwell, Lillian Wright.

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Previous Search Focus Groups

The search committee held several focus groups for parishioners, Loaves and Fishes, and members of other community groups affiliated with our church prior to calling Canon Megan Castellan as our most recent rector. Parishioner groups discussed six questions about parishioners' experiences of St. John's and what we most value about our community. Affiliated Group discussions focused on gaining an understanding of St. John's presence and reputation in the larger Ithaca community. For a Summary of Focus Group Responses from the previous search, click/tap the link [previous profile](#) and see pages 14 (starting at the bottom) and 15.

The Spiritual Genealogy (the story of St. John's corporate journey of faith)

In 2016, all parishioners were invited to participate in constructing a timeline of important events in the life of the parish. The group included some parishioners who have been at St. John's for many decades and some who have been attending for only a few weeks. The exercise was lively, powerful, and educational for all who participated in building community and appreciating our shared history over nearly 200 years.

Reflections on our Parish Identity

Parishioner Themes

Four main themes are present in data gathered from parishioners:

1. We deeply care about worship and how it is conducted, particularly sermons and the Liturgy.
2. We appreciate our existing fellowship and connectedness, and we have a desire to grow our community.
3. It is important to us to be engaged with the community and to reach out to those in need through ministries, partnerships, and pastoral care.
4. We value our inclusiveness and diversity.

St. John's parishioners value these things in our community, in each other and in leaders who encourage them. Two other things are worth noting. The first is how parishioners respond to "transparency." An honest and forthright capital campaign and up-front stewardship sermons were mentioned positively in the data and open communication (particularly during times of change) is valued amongst the parish. Second, parishioners noted the importance of the St. John's rector's ability to connect with and care for parishioners of all abilities, as St. John's is the spiritual home of several parishioners with disabilities and parishioners who are unable to regularly attend church.

Affiliated Groups Themes

Themes present in data gathered from groups that have a relationship with St. John's:

1. Community/connectedness with St. John's is valued, and more is desired
2. Affiliated groups value the "sacred space" St. John's provides
3. St. John's is appreciated for its contributions to the larger community
4. Affiliated groups feel the need for pastoral care, as well as an understanding rector who will meet, participate, listen, and include guests from the community

Also mentioned was that St. John's physical location is ideal for partnering on local community events and that the nave and parish hall both work well for parish and community events.

One topic deserves special treatment: *how conflict, challenges, or changes are handled at St. John's*. Some topics that have been divisive elsewhere (e.g. same-sex marriage, LGBTQIA+ ordination) have caused little or no division at St. John's.

The conflict/challenge/change mentioned most frequently in the data is staff changes (e.g., music director, rector). Appreciation was expressed for lay leadership and supply clergy, who stepped up in times of need. There was also mention of some bumpy periods in the 33-year-long relationship between St. John's and Loaves and Fishes, but

that partnership is maturing thanks in large part to our Interim Rector Barb Schmitz, and our most recent rector The Rev. Canon Megan Castellan. A third period of challenge and change was when the Episcopal Church at Cornell (ECC) made the transition from mission to chapel. There is now a history of collaboration between the chaplain of the ECC and the past three rectors of St. John's, which has served well to reduce duplication of mission and ministry in our small city of Ithaca, which has both a campus chapel and a parish. However, some concern has been raised that ECC students have less contact with the multigenerational/diverse community typical of parish life.

A program whose members come from ECC and St. John's and other churches in the diocese is [Education for Ministry](#) (EfM). EfM meets weekly 36 weeks a year to study, pray, and practice theological reflection using the course materials provided by the School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.

Further connections between parish and campus ministries (at Cornell and Ithaca College) may provide opportunities to build stronger, mutually beneficial intergenerational relationships, which help to develop and empower the young Christians in our community and bring fresh ideas and energy to the more established Christians who live here.

Closing

St. John's parishioners look forward to weaving together our sense of St. John's future with a new rector's gifts and passions to plan our course of mission together.

There is much to be excited about in St. John's future:

- Together with guests, staff members and board members of Loaves and Fishes, we will plan and implement opportunities for collaborations that will deepen and enhance our relationship and further our shared goal of providing for community members in need.
- We will continue to forge ahead with the capital campaign facility improvements to our historic building. The extensive work already completed is a testament to the generosity and commitment of parishioners.
- Prayerfully and thoughtfully, we will work to ensure that all parishioners and visitors understand the vital necessity and importance of intentional stewardship practices, giving a portion of our gifts back to God for the building up of the Church here in Ithaca and around the world. We will explore our individual and collective roles in building up the kingdom of God with our treasure, as well as with our time and talents.
- We will work to strengthen our quality music program, which enhances our worship and provides deep and spiritual enjoyment to our parishioners and visitors. We will actively support the music program's continued development.
- In 2022, we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the founding of St. John's! We give God praise and thanksgiving for the formation of an Episcopal society in the (then) Village of Ithaca and the 200 years that St. John's has stood proudly as a symbol of spirituality, faith in action, and God's love!



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If you sense a possible call and would like to inquire further, please contact The Rev. Canon Megan Castellan, Canon to the Ordinary for Formation and Mission Development (mcastellan@cnyepiscopal.org). If you have questions specific to St. John's, you may send email to rectorsearch@stjohnsithaca.org