

# **St. George's Episcopal Church**

## **2025 Annual Report**

A Year of Faith, Service, and Community

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# Ministry Reports

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## Buildings & Grounds

*Tom Forbes, Junior Warden*

In 2025, we addressed the routine and ongoing needs of our beautiful century-and-a-half-old church. Major accomplishments included electrical supply upgrades, a new power box, and the renovation of the back office adjacent to the Rector's office. A new lattice-style fence now encloses the HVAC units and trash area, and the Memorial Garden restoration was beautifully completed.

**Vision for 2026:** Continue facing the challenges that come with a building as old as ours, including potential bell tower tuck-and-point repairs and parapet sealing.

## Altar Guild

*Melanie Christenson, Interim Leader*

Following Carol Cook's retirement after years of dedicated leadership, Melanie Christenson stepped in as interim leader. Three new members were trained, and with help from long-time member Reba Mackey, the team created a comprehensive updated Altar Guild Guide complete with photographs and step-by-step instructions for setting God's Table.

**Vision for 2026:** Complete the Guide by adding sections on linen care, seasonal preparations including Ash Wednesday and Holy Week, and conduct a full inventory of vessels, linens, supplies, and vestments.

## Music Ministry

*Ryan Celestin, Music Director*

The music ministry faithfully supported the congregation through thoughtfully prepared music for Sunday services. The eleven-member volunteer choir returned to regular Wednesday evening rehearsals, building fellowship alongside their musical work. The children's choir, led by Carla Waterfield, brought joy during Epiphany, Lessons and Carols, and Christmas Eve.

**Vision for 2026:** Expand the choir's role in Sunday liturgy to include sung responses, introits, and chants, while seeking to grow membership from both the congregation and professional musicians as budget allows.

## Racial Healing Ministry

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*Bart Reilly, Coordinator*

Ministry members were actively involved in community outreach through their work with Together New Orleans and supported the Diocesan Racial Healing Commission. The ministry strives to create a courageous and respectful space for loving and healing conversations, committed to the transformative work of racial justice and building Beloved Community.

**Vision for 2026:** Continue community-based work with Together New Orleans and expand involvement with both the Racial Healing Commission and Environmental Evangelism Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana.

## Creation Care Ministry

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*Bart Reilly, Coordinator*

The Creation Care Ministry helped parishioners grow closer to God through nature-based spirituality. Highlights included facilitating a Lenten nature-based session in Audubon Park, supporting the Inaugural Mountaintop Youth Event for 14 young people, and helping adapt Season of Creation liturgy for four Sunday services in partnership with Mother Stephanie Fox.

**Vision for 2026:** Continue offering nature-based workshops and maintain active involvement with Together New Orleans for social justice and community resilience.

## Hospitality Ministry

*Alyce Jefferson & Windy Johnson*

The Hospitality Ministry served seven families with meals as they welcomed new babies, underwent surgery, battled illness, and suffered loss—providing comfort during life's most challenging and joyful moments.

**Vision for 2026:** Grow our volunteer base to serve more of our church family during life's challenges.

## Flower Guild

*Barb LaFleur*

The Flower Guild membership more than doubled in 2025, enabling the team to arrange flowers for the church from many different creative perspectives throughout the year.

**Vision for 2026:** Continue providing beautiful arrangements while following a set budget.

## Stewardship

*Emmy Murray & Carla Waterfield*

The Stewardship Committee gathered comparable pledges during a time of transition and added clear emphasis on time and talent as well as treasure.

**Vision for 2026:** Create a campaign that reaches out to one-time donors and those who feel called to give to specific needs and ministries.

## Greeters Ministry

*Lil Samardzija*

The greatest success for our Greeters group was adding three more greeters in 2025, strengthening our ability to welcome all who enter St. George's.

**Vision for 2026:** Continue welcoming all who enter St. George's with the hope that newcomers will find a home here.

## Vestry Nominations

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The following parishioners have been nominated for election to the Vestry.

### Brandan Bonds

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I was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, earned my undergraduate degree at the University of New Orleans, and now live in Mid-City, which I'm proud to call home. I am an attorney at SBSB Eastham, where I help employers and insurance carriers navigate legal and regulatory issues in federal workers compensation.

Before I entered private practice, I served as an in-house counsel at large non-profit, working closely with the executive team to support operations, manage risk, and make decisions grounded in integrity and accountability. I also hold an In-House Counsel Certification from the Association of Corporate Counsel, reflecting my commitment to ethical leadership and responsible stewardship. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with friends, reading, trying new restaurants around the city, and cheering on the Saints and LSU Tigers during football season.

I found St. George's after asking locals on Reddit for recommendations for an LGBT-affirming faith community, and I was immediately drawn to the beauty of the Episcopal liturgy and the warmth of this congregation. This church has become an important spiritual home for me. I am involved in the Dragon Café ministry and also serve as a Greeter and Lector. If elected to the Vestry, I would be honored to serve with care, collaboration, and gratitude as we continue living out our shared mission in New Orleans.

### Thomas Douglass

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I was born and raised in the Midwest, which is why I believe that 75 degrees is a good winter temperature. My work in upper management at Emerson Electric allowed me to move to New Orleans over 50 years ago. Initially I worked in international transportation and manufacturing. I became an imported native. When asked to transfer to another city I worked in middle management in the food industry until retirement. I would like the opportunity to use my skills in planning and organizing to help guide the leadership of St George's community in its regrowth.

I am married to Barbara LaFleur. This church continues to deepen our faith. We embrace a fundamental tenet of Saint George's, that All are Welcome. We support the work of Christ through outreach. We value the beauty that reminds us that we are in a holy place.