

# Holy Communion Anglican Church

*meeting at the*

Rocky Hill Grange  
1340 South County Trail  
East Greenwich, Rhode Island

## Annual Reports 2023



**Fourth Annual Meeting  
February 25, 2024**

# 2023 Annual Report: Nothing Can Separate Us from the Love of God

## The Reverend Nathan Stomberg, *Rector*, Holy Communion Anglican Church

### God's Love is a Fact, Not an Argument

God's testing of Abraham in Genesis chapter 22 is a very familiar, yet rather shocking story. God commands Abraham to take his only son Isaac, the child of promise whom God miraculously brought forth from Abraham's barren wife, to be sacrificed as a burnt offering on the top of Mount Moriah.

However, for all its familiarity we can easily miss the point of this passage. The point is not that God can arbitrarily command you to do whatever He wants, even if it contradicts His moral law. That would make God a tyrant. Nor is the point that the omniscient God somehow needs to test Abraham in order to truly know how faithful and obedient he is. That would make God ignorant.

The main point is not even what we learn about Abraham - that he indeed trusts the LORD God with all his heart, which he demonstrates with total faith and obedience. This is an important part of the story, but it is not THE point, which is what we learn about God.

The point of the Abraham passage comes not at the beginning, but at the end, where we read this:

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. [14] So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The LORD will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’” (Genesis 22:13-14)

In contrast with all the other religions of Abraham's day, God did not want human sacrifice because He created man in His own image, and therefore human life was sacred and worthy of adoption as His sons and daughters. What God began teaching Abraham in this moment was He loved His people, and that one day He would provide His own Son, the Lamb of God, to willingly bear the punishment for our sins.

That same promise, fulfilled in Christ Jesus, is the point Saint Paul makes in chapter 8 of his letter to the Romans:

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ...For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:32,38-39)

God is not forced to love us. Nor do we deserve God's love in any way. Yet God chooses to love us anyway, and that love is manifested in Jesus Christ, His only Son, who gave himself up to death to save us all from eternal death. God's love in Christ is so powerful, Paul reminds us, that it overcame every possible obstacle to our having a relationship with Him - even death. Therefore, because God cannot be defeated, there is nothing that can defeat us if we are joined to Him by faith in Jesus

Christ, and because Christ overcame all things for us, there is nothing that can separate us from God's love in Christ if we repent and seek him with a sincere heart.

God's love is not an argument, nor is it a theory, nor an invention of the human mind. God's love is a historical fact, the fact of Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. Jesus Christ is fact and therefore our relationship with him is fact as well. By faith, our adoption as God's sons and daughters is as much a fact as our relationship to our own parents, and nothing external can change that reality - not even death.

## **Navigating Life's Rapidly Changing Landscape**

As the landscape of our lives and the landscape of our ministries both change (rapidly at times), may the words of Saint Paul be a constant reminder: Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the first book of Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings," the protagonist Frodo, struggling to comprehend the suffering he will have to endure as a reluctant hero, has this exchange with the wizard Gandalf:

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." (J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Fellowship of the Ring," Chapter 2)

J.R.R. Tolkien, being a devout Roman Catholic, understood that this was a dilemma every person must face in his life. We do not choose the time or place into which we are born; God's providence determines those circumstances. Yet God does not rob us of our free will, and so the choice is ours as to how we will use the time God has given us. For the Christian, we must remember that trials are a guaranteed part of the human experience. Rather than lament the trials we face, we can choose to spread the Gospel using the gifts God has given us in the time and season in which He placed us.

Holy Communion Anglican Church has faced no shortage of trials over the last year. Surely each and every one of us has had reason to stop and say, "I wish it need not have happened in my time." Yet despite the difficulties we faced (both corporately and individually), and despite the longings we feel for the good desires of our hearts, Saint Paul's words continue to ring true: "Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## **The Fruit of Digital Ministry**

Ever true to His word, God has blessed us far more abundantly than we could ever ask or think (see Ephesians 3:20), allowing our humble congregation to reach people all over the world with the Gospel in the year 2023, even despite our small size. God accomplished this task with a means we did not expect (digital ministry) to a degree we could not have imagined.

From last year through today, sermons through our online ministry were viewed over 50,000 times by people across the United States and around the world, from places such as Canada and the U.K. to India and the Philippines. Articles on our blog were also read over five hundred times across a similar distribution of countries.

Last year was also the first full year of The Lively Faith Podcast, a ministry we launched at the very end of 2022. Over the course of 2023, our podcast - focused on sharing the Gospel through frank conversations about issues relevant to the Christian life - grew to an audience of nearly eight hundred monthly listeners, while our YouTube channel received over 20,000 views. As we enter the year 2024, we pray that God may continue to grow this ministry to advance the Gospel, even as we continue to explore ways to expand and sustain this ministry into the future.

I share these humbling statistics not only to encourage us in the work of ministry but also to make a point: Just because God gives us fruit different from what we asked for, that does not make the fruit any less valuable. We may ask for apples and God gives us oranges. Both the apple and the orange are inherently good fruit, but the fruit is for God to decide, and not us. As Saint Paul writes to the Corinthians, “So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” (1 Corinthians 3:7)

I will admit that the original intention for our online ministries was to invite people into the fold of our congregation. That is a good fruit to desire, and it is still a desire of ours. Yet for reasons only known to God, He has used our labors not to bring an increase within our four walls but to bring an exponentially greater increase in those who have been nurtured by His Word by means of digital outreach. Indeed, even as an outreach ministry, our blog, sermons, and podcast look very different from what we typically imagine. Yet, I would again encourage us to recognize that the resources we have dedicated to digital outreach serve a purpose equally noble to that served by more traditional means.

Beloved, the landscape of ministry has changed dramatically over the last decade, and Holy Communion Anglican Church and the Lively Faith Podcast are uniquely positioned to share the Gospel in that brave new world - not to the neglect of the local congregation, but in support of it, wherever the Faithful may be gathered.

## **The Roman Roads of the Modern Age**

Consider the ministry of the Apostle Paul. From the moment of his conversion on the road to Damascus, Saint Paul made it his life’s mission to proclaim, “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (see 1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul preached the Gospel despite many persecutions and risks to his life, especially at the hands of the Roman Empire (who would ultimately have him beheaded).

The expansion of the Roman Empire across the ancient world brought dramatic changes along with it, including many technological innovations: Roman concrete, which stands the test of time even to this day; advances in architecture, such as the Roman arch; running water, through the use of aqueducts; and most importantly, Roman roads.

The Ancient Romans engineered a network of roads over 50,000 miles long, all stemming from the capital city. These roads represented a drastic increase in mobility between provinces of the Roman Empire, increasing the rate of commerce, military transport, personal travel, and the flow of information. Though the spread of the Roman Empire across the ancient world accelerated cultural change dramatically (and with it the persecution of Christians), Saint Paul nonetheless saw an opportunity to spread the Gospel.

Over the course of his 30-year ministry, Paul traveled an estimated 10,000 miles across the Roman Empire as he preached the Gospel, largely through the use of Roman Roads. The Apostle Paul tactfully used the technology of his day to preach the Gospel all over the world, even as the Romans transformed the world around him. Yet he did so fearlessly because of his confidence that nothing could separate him from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

For ministry in our modern age, digital media represents the new Roman roads. As of 2023, 42% of Americans ages twelve and older reported listening to a podcast in the past month, according to the Pew Research Center. According to the research organization Statista, over one hundred million Americans are projected to listen to podcasts in 2024.

The statistics for YouTube are even more staggering. Per Statista, YouTube has roughly 2.7 billion monthly active users worldwide, with 62% of all Internet users accessing YouTube daily. Though the user base skews male at 54.4%, usage of the site was distributed evenly across all age groups. YouTube is also considered the second largest search engine (behind Google) and the second largest social media platform (behind Facebook).

## **Conclusion**

While these mediums must never replace interpersonal discipleship and the regular worship of God in Word and Sacrament within the local church, to ignore them as a means of spreading the Gospel would be akin to Saint Paul refusing to use Roman roads and ships to traverse the Roman Empire. Let us praise God for equipping our humble congregation to travel the Roman roads of our day so boldly, and may He see fit to lead us even further in the future.

As we navigate the year ahead, may we remember that although years past have not gone as we expected nor as we planned, God's Word still went forth, and it did not return to Him empty, but accomplished that which He purposed, and succeeded in the thing for which He sent it (see Isaiah 55:11). And let us take heart, for whatever the year 2024 brings, nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. May the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ crown the coming year with His blessing. Amen.

## Report of the Vice President/Treasurer

We thank God for another year of worship and ministry at Holy Communion Anglican Church. Our Congregation has become somewhat smaller, but we held 57 worship services in 2023, with an average in-person attendance of about 10, and we reached many others through the internet, particularly through the ministry of The Lively Faith Podcast. We continue to look forward to what God has planned for us as we praise and worship Him.

During 2023, Holy Communion Anglican Church had receipts of \$45,293.59 and expenditures of \$33,597.55. The balance in our savings account at the end of the year was \$79,855.10. The receipts included \$42,723.00 from tithes and offerings, plus \$2,470.59 from savings account interest. Significant expenses included compensation to our Rector of \$14,300.00 as a housing allowance, worship space rent of \$4,275.00, and communication expenses totaling \$9,684.94, which included \$5,982.04 to promote our Church on the internet plus \$2,700.00 in payments to Josh Fenton for video editing and assistance in relation to The Lively Faith Podcast ministry. Our primary outreach spending was a donation of \$1,200.00 to Harmony Women's Care (formerly known as CareNet RI).

The Operating Budget for 2024 projects income of \$38,100.00 and \$35,280.00 in spending, leaving \$2,820.00 to be added to savings. The Board of Directors approved this budget on December 13, 2023 based on the proposal from a Budget Committee consisting of Nathan Stomberg, Bob Bickerstaff, Doug Stomberg, Cindy Hall, and Roger Hall. The budget anticipates less income than in previous years due to the current reduced size of our Congregation, but that income should be sufficient to cover all of our expected expenses. We were still able to include a modest increase in the compensation to our Rector, but we reduced the budgeted amounts of a number of line items which had not required the full amounts budgeted for this past year. We must always remember that the budget is really only a guideline and that spending is monitored and controlled by the Leadership Team (Board of Directors) and can exceed budgeted amounts when necessary or authorized. We still have a goal of utilizing ten percent of our income for outreach spending, but we have yet to determine how God would have us accomplish that. As a result, we didn't budget the full ten percent amount in that line item, but we are open to spending more than the budgeted amount if we believe we have come to know God's plan for the best use of those funds.

The next three pages contain a detailed look at our 2023 finances, the 2024 budget, and the in-person attendance at our worship services during 2023. Please don't hesitate to contact me at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the finances or financial reports of our Congregation or about any other matters relating to our Church.

Your servant in Christ,  
Bob Bickerstaff

# Annual Financial Report for 2023

<b>Balance as of January 1, 2023</b>		<b>\$71,042.65</b>
First Internet Bank Money Market Savings Account	\$68,384.51	
Centreville Bank Checking Account	<u>\$2,658.14</u>	
Total	<b>\$71,042.65</b>	

<b>Receipts</b>		
Tithes and Offerings	\$42,723.00	
Savings Account Interest	\$2,470.59	
Credit Card Cashback Rewards	\$100.00	
Other Receipts	<u>\$0.00</u>	
Total Receipts		\$45,293.59

<b>Disbursements</b>		
Rector's Housing Allowance	\$14,300.00	
Bishop-retired's Housing Allowance	\$1,080.00	
Worship Space Rental Expense	\$4,275.00	
Worship Service Expenses	\$1,086.82	
Communication Expenses	\$9,684.94	
Purchases of Worship Furnishings	\$78.78	
Purchases of Clergy Supplies	\$0.00	
Fellowship Expenses	\$311.60	
Administrative Expenses	\$582.68	
Insurance Expense	\$855.00	
Outreach Spending	\$1,255.98	
Ministerial Expenses	<u>\$86.75</u>	
Total Disbursements		<u>(\$33,597.55)</u>

<b>Balance as of December 31, 2023</b>		<b>\$82,738.69</b>
First Internet Bank Money Market Savings Account	\$79,855.10	
Centreville Bank Checking Account	\$2,266.59	
Checking Account Deposit In Transit	<u>\$617.00</u>	
Total	<b>\$82,738.69</b>	

<b>Significant Spending Included Above:</b>		
Communication Expenses		
Facebook and Google Advertising	\$5,982.04	
Payments for Video Editing & Assistance	\$2,700.00	
Outreach Spending		
Donation to Harmony Women's Care	\$1,200.00	

## Approved Budget for 2024

	<u>Budget 2023</u>	<u>Actual 2023</u>	<u>Budget 2024</u>
<b>Receipts</b>			
Tithes and Offerings	\$52,000.00	\$42,723.00	\$36,000.00
Savings Account Interest	\$500.00	\$2,470.59	\$2,000.00
Other Receipts	<u>\$100.00</u>	<u>\$100.00</u>	<u>\$100.00</u>
Totals	\$52,600.00	\$45,293.59	\$38,100.00
<b>Disbursements</b>			
Rector's Housing Allowance	\$14,300.00	\$14,300.00	\$15,080.00
Bishop-retired's Housing Allowance	\$5,040.00	\$1,080.00	\$0.00
Worship Space Rental Expense	\$4,200.00	\$4,275.00	\$4,400.00
Worship Service Expenses	\$1,600.00	\$1,086.82	\$1,400.00
Communication Expenses	\$7,000.00	\$9,684.94	\$9,700.00
Purchases of Worship Furnishings	\$700.00	\$78.78	\$100.00
Purchases of Clergy Supplies	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$200.00
Fellowship Expenses	\$500.00	\$311.60	\$400.00
Administrative Expenses	\$700.00	\$582.68	\$600.00
Insurance Expense	\$1,000.00	\$855.00	\$900.00
Outreach Spending	\$5,260.00	\$1,255.98	\$1,500.00
Ministerial Expenses	<u>\$2,500.00</u>	<u>\$86.75</u>	<u>\$1,000.00</u>
Totals	\$43,800.00	\$33,597.55	\$35,280.00
<b>Savings</b>	\$8,800.00	\$11,696.04	\$2,820.00
<b>Compensation Information</b>			
Rector's Housing Allowance (per week)	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$290.00



## In-Person Attendance – 2023

1/1/2023	Sunday	16	7/2/2023	Sunday	6
1/8/2023	Sunday	18	7/9/2023	Sunday	9
1/15/2023	Sunday	12	7/16/2023	Sunday	9
1/22/2023	Sunday	10	7/23/2023	Sunday	6
1/29/2023	Sunday	10	7/30/2023	Sunday	8
2/5/2023	Sunday	13	8/6/2023	Sunday	8
2/12/2023	Sunday	14	8/13/2023	Sunday	8
2/19/2023	Sunday	11	8/20/2023	Sunday	10
2/22/2023	Ash Wednesday	11	8/27/2023	Sunday	9
2/26/2023	Sunday	10	9/3/2023	Sunday	10
3/5/2023	Sunday	16	9/10/2023	Sunday	9
3/12/2023	Sunday	9	9/17/2023	Sunday	10
3/19/2023	Sunday	12	9/24/2023	Sunday	6
3/26/2023	Sunday	8	10/1/2023	Sunday	7
4/2/2023	Sunday	14	10/8/2023	Sunday	7
4/7/2023	Good Friday	12	10/15/2023	Sunday	5
4/8/2023	Easter Vigil	10	10/22/2023	Sunday	9
4/16/2023	Sunday	13	10/29/2023	Sunday	10
4/23/2023	Sunday	9	11/5/2023	Sunday	10
4/30/2023	Sunday	11	11/12/2023	Sunday	9
5/7/2023	Sunday	9	11/19/2023	Sunday	8
5/14/2023	Sunday	17	11/22/2023	Thanksgiving Eve	8
5/21/2023	Sunday	9	11/26/2023	Sunday	9
5/28/2023	Sunday	9	12/3/2023	Sunday	8
6/4/2023	Sunday	11	12/10/2023	Sunday	5
6/11/2023	Sunday	14	12/17/2023	Sunday	10
6/18/2023	Sunday	8	12/23/2023	4 Advent	6
6/25/2023	Sunday	11	12/24/2023	Christmas Eve	15
			12/31/2023	Sunday	7

**Total Services in 2023: 57**

**Average Attendance: 10.0**

Total Services in 2022: 54

Average Attendance: 15.5

Total Services in 2021: 53

Average Attendance: 17.5

# Holy Communion Anglican Church

*meeting at the*

Rocky Hill Grange  
1340 S. County Trail  
East Greenwich, RI

*The Reverend Nathan Stomberg, Rector*

website: [holycommunionri.org](http://holycommunionri.org)  
facebook: Holy Communion Anglican Church  
email: [anglicanfellowshipri@gmail.com](mailto:anglicanfellowshipri@gmail.com)

## Sunday Worship

Holy Communion  
Fellowship

5:00 p.m.  
6:30 p.m.

## Board of Directors

President	The Rev. Nathan Stomberg <a href="mailto:nstomberg14@gmail.com">nstomberg14@gmail.com</a> ▪ 401-588-1226
Vice President & Treasurer	Bob Bickerstaff <a href="mailto:the4bicks@juno.com">the4bicks@juno.com</a> ▪ 401-828-7216
Secretary	Barbara Bickerstaff <a href="mailto:babickerstaff@yahoo.com">babickerstaff@yahoo.com</a> ▪ 401-714-2360
Director	Adam Stomberg <a href="mailto:stomberg9@gmail.com">stomberg9@gmail.com</a> ▪ 401-743-0403

*“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man  
and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”*

(John 6:53)