

Candidates for Election to the Vestry



Senior Warden
Sandra DeHart-Mayor

Tell us about yourself:

I was raised in the Episcopal church and am the proud daughter of the Dr. Rev. Elsa DeHart, of Kodiak. I spent a few years away from the church when I was a teenager/young adult but came back when my oldest daughter was born - knowing that I wanted her to experience the same type of faith community I had while growing up. I've been a part of the St. Marys' community since 2003 and previously worked in the Nursery when my oldest was a baby and I was attending college. Since that time, I have completed several terms on the vestry, representing Early Childhood and

Youth Ministries; chaired the Playschool Advisory Board (and was actively involved in the playschool when my children were attending); have volunteered for the FISH pantry for many years as a driver and packer; taught Sunday School; and was blessed to be a chaperone on our last mission trip to Malawi.

I have a graduate degree in Social Work and for the last two decades, I have worked in the fields of Child Protection and Juvenile Justice, for the State of Alaska. Within those fields (for the past nine years), my work has focused on project, technology, and financial management which led me to recently complete schooling for my certification in Project Management.

My husband and I have been together since we were teenagers and we have three amazing children, Jadyann (20), Jace (13), and Paitynn (11). On Sundays, from September to May, you will most often see me hanging around the coffee cart with the youth group; during the 'summer months', we spend our weekends at our cabin in Soldotna.

What do you value and love at St. Mary's?

Our community and the values within that community. It has always been a priority for me to ensure my children have exposure to a faith community that is safe and where they are accepted. My children know that, regardless of what may be going on in life or where they may be in the world, that they can find a place like St. Mary's, and they will be welcomed. There are many people at St. Mary's who have become like family to us, and I am beyond thankful for the love shown to my children and I.

Additionally, the values of St. Mary's, specifically in reference to volunteerism, social justice, and equality, are tremendously significant to me.

Where do you believe God is calling us as a community of faith in the years ahead?

To continue to support those in need, both within and out, of our community. To sustain our current community while working to engage and create space for the younger generations. To open our hearts, minds and community to change, acceptance and grace.



Caring Ministries Maggie Wilkinson

I am a lifelong Alaskan, and a long time member of St Mary's and a proud member of the St Anna and St Simeon Society of Elders. I have completed one term as your representative for Caring Ministries on the Vestry and would like to stay in that capacity for another term.

St Mary's is where I have found a supportive family and have grown in love and confidence. It is here that I have been encouraged to stretch and learn to know Jesus better and to understand the meaning of faith. The most important role models in my life are here or have been here and been a positive influence for me. It has been here at St Mary's that I have been fed physically, mentally and Spiritually through classes, preaching, teaching, listening and even singing. I am seeing new people coming in and I'm excited to see the growth of St Mary's. Our children lead us and so do each member of the congregation. Not only are all welcomed at St Mary's, also all are valued at St Mary's.



Children's Christian Formation Amy Gruber

Greetings to the community at St. Mary's.

I was honored last year at the annual meeting to be elected to fill the last year of a previous vestry member's term. It has been a fulfilling year, meeting more members of our community, and working with other members of the Christian Formation team in nurturing the children at St. Mary's. I have reflected on my own experience as a child in "Sunday School," which was a significant and formative time in my life as a Christian. I am eager to continue to work with the capable team to further enhance Christian Formation for our kids, who, by the way, are wonderful. We have just embarked on a new schedule this semester, and Godly Play (Montessori approach to Christian ed) and older children's Christian Formation are taking place at 10:00 on Sunday mornings during the worship service. Children are then rejoining families for the eucharist. So far, the schedule change has been met with enthusiasm. I welcome any and all to comment and ask me about this exciting change.

In my life outside St. Mary's, I am a musician, a retired family physician, parent of five adult sons, grandmother of one and a half, and wife of a farmer/retired physician in Wyoming. I have been attending St. Mary's since moving to Alaska 6+ years ago. I enjoy hanging out with the bazaar ladies and the summertime gardeners. I would be glad to continue to serve on the Vestry.



Community Building (Fellowship and Hospitality) Maggie McKay

Tell us about yourself:

Hello! To those of you that do not know me personally, I'm Maggie McKay. My family includes my wonderful husband Ross and my two energetic boys, Charlie and William and our hound dog Pete. My family has been members of the Saint Mary's family for the past 13 years. Professionally, I work for the rural community of Port Alsworth managing the power plant, city government a local air taxi. I have a background in Project Management and have been working with rural communities for the past 14 years. I enjoy volunteering and find myself helping out where I can. I spend my summers in the garden and exploring our amazing state and my winters planning my summers!

What do you value and love at St. Mary's?

At St. Mary's I value the voice that the congregation has within the church and I love that the clergy and lay leadership listen and consider the voice of the congregation. The result of this practice and culture within Saint Mary's has truly made it an amazing institution. Of course, all of this is achieved through the amazing people and the ideals, passions and dreams we all bring to the table. Originally, I fell in love with the tradition and soul of the liturgy, especially the choir and organ.



Stewardship Development Al Alvarez

I have been an active member of the Episcopal Church since my college years in Boulder, CO. I grew up in a family devoted to ministry, my father and grandfather being pastors in the Baptist Church. I am retired from a career in fund raising through the executive management of non-profit foundations within the health care sector. Within the Episcopal Church, I have served on the Vestry and as Warden of several parishes and as a member of committees and commissions on the Diocesan level. Serving in various musical capacities within the church has also been a primary interest of mine and remains a focus for me to this day. I first came to St Mary's in 1985 and have served on the Vestry, as a Lay Eucharistic Minister, as cantor and chorister, and on several outreach groups. I am also a proud member of the St Mary's Snowshovel Brigade.



Youth Ministries Tracey Burke

Tell us about yourself:

I grew up on the east coast and first moved to Alaska (Bethel and Fairbanks) as a Jesuit Volunteer in 1989. I was back and forth for graduate school and moved to Anchorage when I started teaching at UAA in 2003. My kids have grown up here. The oldest is launched but still lives in town; the younger two are at home with my husband, our cats, and myself. Look for me in front of the fire with a novel and a pot of tea.

What do you value and love at St. Mary's?

I value the combination of the ritual and commitment to the Biblical stories with honoring the myriad ways that God is present in and to different people. I appreciate the countercultural flavor, in today's world, of a progressive Christianity. It's my younger kids' involvement with the youth group that prompted my interest in this vestry position.

Where do you believe God is calling us as a community of faith in the years ahead?

In the next few years, we will necessarily learn to be community together in new ways as we adapt to fiscal realities and ongoing challenges in the wider world. I believe we can be strength for each other and a witness to the larger community that, to quote Old Turtle (Douglas Wood), we humans are called to be "a message of love from God to the earth, and a prayer from the earth back to God."



Worship

Charlene Davis

Tell us about yourself:

I grew up in a small town North of Boston. My mother was Catholic, my father was Episcopalian, and I was raised a Methodist! Moving to Anchorage in 1967 was a bit like moving to the Wild West. My two children were born in Alaska, and each have reached the 50+ year age mark. A little over 5 years ago due to health reasons, I reluctantly retired from an extensive career of management in primarily medical, physician, lawyer, and executive recruitment. Over the first almost 30 years of our marriage, my husband Ron and I worked and traveled the US and Canada racking up 8 moves. We returned to Alaska in 2005 and resettled in Anchorage where I began the search for a spiritual home, which I found at St. Mary's.

What do you value and love at St. Mary's?

Since we last met at the 2023 Annual Meeting, much has changed about what I value and love about St. Mary's. Serving Christ, Inclusion and equality are among my core values and because of you – the Ministers of St. Mary's, I have been welcomed to serve on the Vestry, Budget Committee and Altar Guild, as well as participate as a Host and Sunday Scripture reader. With open arms I have been welcomed to participate in myriad ways: Bible Study, Caring Ministries, Bazaar and Thursday evening and Sunday gatherings. May I also take a moment to offer my gratitude and thanks to the Choir and Praise Singers, who not only deliver uplifting and spiritual music week after week, but who have made my Worship Vestry duties a cinch.

Where do you believe God is calling us as a community of faith in the years ahead?

There is an undeniable need to continue our outreach to those in need whether within our St. Mary's family, the aged, or the homeless and/or disenfranchised within our community. However, the lifeblood of our parish – the youth and the young children, continue to need the focus of every adult St. Mary's member. Seeking and welcoming young couples and their families into St. Mary's, engaging everyone in meaningful dialogue to understand current generational needs and expectations, and making every attempt possible to meet those needs will fill our hearts – and more importantly Christ's heart – with joy and thanksgiving. As Ministers, we do not have to lose "our traditions and our heritage," but rather potentially

expand them. Lastly, as we all participate in our individual and shared spiritual journeys, may we the Ministers of St. Mary's gather together to address all revitalization ideas in support of further enriching the experience of everyone.



Candidates for Deanery/Diocesan Delegate

Four positions are available.



Deanery/Diocesan Delegate

Adam Lees

Tell us about yourself:

I am a lifelong Episcopalian, attendee of the 8 am service, and currently serve in the altar guild and as a Sunday School teacher and Godly Play doorman. I have also been blessed with participating in convention and in our deanery since 2015.

What do you value and love at/about St. Mary's?

My community at 8 am and in the children's ministry and the volunteer ministries we do with Choosing Our Roots and the Emergency Cold Weather Shelter.

Where do you believe God is calling us as a community of faith in the years ahead?

We are marching into the wilderness – a time of change but also fantastic opportunity for renewal and discernment.



Deanery/Diocesan Delegate

Maggie McKay

One of my first volunteer roles in the church was as a diocesan delegate and I fell in love with our larger church family! Over the years, I have worked on many diocesan committees including 4 years on the South Central Deanery Executive Committee. I have been selected to represent the South Central Laity at General Convention 81 this summer. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to continue serving St. Mary's in this role.



Deanery/Diocesan Delegate

Ross McKay

Tell us about yourself: My name is Ross McKay. I am a Husband, Father, and a Postulant to the Priesthood in the Diocese of Alaska. I have been a member of St. Mary's for around ten years, and during that time I have served as a lay reader, usher, vestry member, and occasionally I've even gotten to pick up donuts for coffee hour. I

currently work in the office as the Coordinator of Church Ministries, and attend Vancouver School of Theology through a distance MDiv program.

What do you value and love at/about St. Mary's?

St. Mary's is a diverse and vibrant community of people, who are all striving to follow Christ and make a positive impact on the world around them. They are always welcoming, caring, and supportive of others, and the generous spirit of this church community is a real blessing to be a part of.

Where do you believe God is calling us as a community of faith in the years ahead?

We are called to continue our work of support for the community of Anchorage, and to walk beside the suffering in love. So that through our continued ministry, others could see a way to restoration and life.



**Deanery/Diocesan Delegate
Emily Nenon**

Tell us about yourself:

I would love to be a delegate for two reasons:

- 1) Personally, I learn so much from spending time with folks from other congregations in our vast and unique state.
- 2) As a member of St. Mary's and our larger Deanery and Diocesan community, I would love to help facilitate better congregational collaboration. We are part of

such a rich tradition. We have much to learn from our neighbors and much to share. I want to be part of this learning, sharing, growing, and getting stronger together.

What do you value and love at/about St. Mary's?

What I value about St. Mary's is the opportunity for constant re-creating ourselves as individuals and as a community. That and the Thanksgiving pancake breakfast, which is hands down my favorite holiday tradition.

Where do you believe God is calling us as a community of faith in the years ahead?

We are called to live in community and to be good neighbors. As a member of St. Mary's, I feel called to help further develop systems of support and opportunities to learn from other congregations in the Deanery and Diocese.



**Deanery/Diocesan Delegate
Christina Talbott-Clark**

Tell us about yourself:

I've been a member of St. Mary's since I was a kid, and now I am raising my kids here (that's my eldest looking skeptical in the photo). I have been singing in the choir since 2002, and since 2020 I work part time in the church office, editing the weekly newsletter and managing the church website. I love serving St. Mary's through my music, writing, and design work.

Last year was the first time I had attended the Deanery Annual Meeting and Diocesan Convention in at least fifteen years. I am excited about getting more involved in the larger church and offering my service to the Deanery and the Diocese. Last year, I was on the Resolutions Committee at Diocesan Convention, and I had a blast researching and drafting our resolutions. I would love to be able to do that again this year.

What do you value and love at/about St. Mary's?

St. Mary's is my spiritual home. I grew up here, and after a few years elsewhere in my early twenties I realized that St. Mary's is where I belong. I love the sense of community that we have here and I love that we are always trying to seek a better understanding of God's will for us. We aren't perfect, but we are really trying to live out the ideal that all are welcome. That's the work of the spirit, and it's hard work, and it's the most important work there is.

Where do you believe God is calling us as a community of faith in the years ahead?

I think that the church is called to reevaluate what it means to be a community of faith, and what it means to live out our faith, in a society where people seem to have less and less time and ability to gather and work together, but need connection and mutual support more than ever. I believe part of our calling is to meet people where they are so they can be fully included in the beloved community of God.



Candidate for Thomas Center Board



**Thomas Center for Senior Leadership Board Member
Ruth Nighswander**

St Mary's has always been a "Beacon on the Hill". As my background is in teaching and nursing, I've had a strong interest in education and health in the community. The church has provided both along with the spirituality I find so needed in families. I consider families to be both intergenerational and extended whether by blood or choice. St Mary's family is a wonderful family!

