

CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION TO THE VESTRY, DELEGATION, AND BOARDS St. Mary's Annual Meeting 2026



Candidates for Election to the Vestry



Senior Warden
Sandra DeHart-Mayor

Tell us about yourself:

I've been an active member of St. Mary's for over two decades. My three children were baptized here, attended the Playschool, and have been involved in children's and youth programs since early childhood. Over the years, I've served on the Playschool board, multiple terms on the vestry representing Early Childhood and Youth Ministries, and most recently as Senior Warden. Professionally, I work in a leadership role

within the Alaska Department of Health and also do contract work completing adoption and guardianship home studies, which takes me to some of the state's most rural communities. I'm a social worker, advocate, mother, and former foster parent, with a mix of skills shaped by experience in leadership, budgeting, IT, and project management.

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

I was raised in the Episcopal church and am the daughter of a deacon (the amazing Rev. Dr. Elsa DeHart). I've always loved the traditions of the Episcopal Church, but it's St. Mary's commitment to social justice, human rights, diversity, and service that makes this parish home for me. Here, faith is lived out through action and care for the wider community—and as a social worker, that is core to who I am.

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

I believe we are called to continue and deepen the good work we already do - serving one another, our neighbors, and the wider community. We are called to nurture and grow our children's and youth ministries, and to welcome new members so our community remains vibrant and sustainable. At the same time, we are called to be faithful stewards of our resources so that St. Mary's can continue its ministry for generations to come.



Caring Ministries
Emily Low

Tell us about yourself:

I'm a clinically trained therapist, and member of St. Mary's over the past couple years, where I have been the co-facilitator for the "Healing from Purity Culture" group. In the past I have been active in the Episcopal Diocese of Hawaii, and at St. George's Episcopal Church in Cordova.

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

One of the things I value at St. Mary's is the inclusive and caring nature of this community, and its responsiveness to the needs of the wider community. For me, church, the place, is a space to breathe and remember that God is, was and will always be with me. Church, the people, are the folks who I can rest in spirit with. And church, the practice, is a touchstone to keep me connecting to Jesus, myself, and others.

And in all these ways St Mary's is healing. More defining of myself than the alphabet behind my name, I have a very debilitating chronic health condition and I feel forever blessed each day I wake up and am able to walk, and for the reminder sometimes, still, to be grateful for it because it can be too easy to forget and take it for granted.

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

Our challenge in times like these is to be who have always been – an inclusive faith community reaching out love to our neighbors and those around us. Caring Ministries is one of the many ways in which that intention is lived out, through prayer, through supporting families in times of crisis, bringing meals or even the Eucharist to those who are sick or recovering from surgeries or illness, and visiting those who are often cut off from the wider community. My wish is that St Mary's can be as healing and connecting to self, others and the divine for each person we touch in our community, as my church experiences have been, and continue to be, for me.



Children's Christian Formation

Amy Gruber

Tell us about yourself:

Retired from family medicine, parent of five, grandparent of two. I am a musician and enjoy reading. I am a life-long church attendee, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and home in the Episcopal Church for the past 50 years. My husband and I like to travel. I share an enjoyment of Alaska with several daily walks with my canine companion, Duncan.

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

Openness, acceptance, generational diversity. Encouragement to explore the spiritual world together with others in worship, study, and fellowship. I often feel that the physical space of St. Mary's is a "thin place" where communion with God and others is especially available.

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

Good question. I'm interested to find out! I would expect we are called to be an example of acceptance and charity/love to all in our community, in our church family, city, region, country, and world.

Is there something else you would like to add?

I would like to know from the congregation your vision for welcoming children in the life of the church, in knowledge of God, in service, in worship, in fellowship. What can you do to help support our efforts in Children's Ministry?



Community Building (Fellowship and Hospitality)

Carmen Wenger

My name is Carmen Wenger, and I have been a member of St. Mary's since 2011. You will often find me chasing my two spirited daughters around the church or joined by my husband, Haim. We are an interfaith family and actively participate in both the Episcopal and Reform Jewish faiths. Professionally, I work in Public Health and am passionate about building equitable health systems. My faith journey led me to the Episcopal church as a college student, and I have found great joy in the process of the lifelong learning that comes as part of belonging to a faith community, especially when that journey begins as a young adult.

I love St. Mary's – the people, the mission, and the strength of faith in the community. I value the spirit of fierce questioning inseparably paired with strong faith at the core of our spiritual

community. I find strength in the work done by our congregation out in the community to be the most just use of God's creation, and I find joy in the radical hospitality that our community strives for. These are some of the elements that are at the core of St. Mary's for me, and I hope to continue to foster them through the work of the Community Building ministry.



Growth and Communications

Rachel Christy

Tell us about yourself:

Together with my husband John of 34 years, we have 3 grown sons and one lovely daughter-in-law. I am a retired peony farmer having started and eventually (10 yrs later) sold Alaska Blooms Peony Farm. It was magical and back breaking. For the past 25 years, I've worked with Bible Study Fellowship in various roles in Anchorage and most recently in Germany as a Distant online Trainer. We returned from Europe 2 years ago with John's job and we've attended St. Mary's for a little more than a year now.

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

I love the warmth and inclusivity I received upon first visiting St. Mary's. The love and community outreach efforts for our vulnerable neighbors is a value I esteem and support.

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

I see St. Mary's place at the table with the Municipality of Anchorage continuing and growing. But I also see a safe haven for people (specifically women) coming out of oppressive religious organizations- continuing to hold Christ's light of love for all those seeking God and community.



Stewardship Development

Gretchen Guess

Tell us about yourself:

I was born and raised in Anchorage and have attended St. Mary's since I was a toddler, celebrated the life of both my parents here, was married by Chuck, Michael, and Connie, and baptized both our children here.

I've had many day jobs including public service, health care administration, and philanthropy.

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

Regardless of whether I lived in Anchorage or not, or attended services more than Christmas Eve or not, St. Mary's has always been home.

"Everyone's welcome at the Lord's table." I was way into my adult life before I learned not every church is this way.

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

Oh my. I think about this question a lot personally and professionally. I think God is calling us to demonstrate intentionally a path of community love, acceptance, and hope.



Worship

Rilene Ann

Tell us about yourself:

Original arrival to Alaska due to USAF military service 1976-1981.

Member of Duvall Family that established Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Maryland in 1836. I retired from Veteran Administration as an Addiction Therapist Jan 2021 but have volunteered regularly in my community with Eagle River Food Pantry and facilitate SMART recovery groups at Partners For Progress serving individuals recently released from prison. I have three grown children; daughter incarcerated release set Aug 31, 2048, son who is a dentist in the Navy stationed in Japan and a son who is a welder and metal artist in Oregon with my grandchild.

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

I love the community of St Mary's because we are accepting and follow a love based thinking style rather than a shame based system previously involved with. I come here and work where there is a need; Re-gift Room at Bazaar, Coordinate Taize 3rd Thursdays September through May, Altar Set up, Spanish service 2nd Sunday each month, Water poinsettias/lilies, and Usher as needed. One of my favorite activities is supporting the children's Christmas service, love those bunnies & dinosaurs.

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

God is with me everyday urging me on to "ease the pain" of the world. I have not chased fame or fortune but a simple life filled with simple pleasures. I admire the Mother Mary and have a Pieta to remind me daily of the pain in life and Joy found in hope. I admire St Francis and believe we are to repair and heal our Church. He was tasked to build but I believe that is Spiritually, mentally and physically.



Candidates for Deanery/Diocesan Delegate

Seven positions are available.



Deanery/Diocesan Delegate
Christina Talbott-Clark

Tell us about yourself:

I am a long-time member of St. Mary's, having grown up here, left, and then returned in my mid-twenties; now my kids are also part of the congregation. I sing in the choir, and I do some office work for the church, mostly editing the weekly newsletter and updating the website. I

love learning new things and sharing them with others, and one of my favorite pastimes is enjoying a lively conversation over a good meal.

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

St. Mary's is my spiritual home and family. I cherish the relationships I have here, the warm welcome we extend to old-timers and first-timers alike, the spirit of inquiry and mutual support, and the way we live out our call to be Christ's heart and hands in the world in so many different and important ways in our community and beyond.

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

In a world with big problems, it's easy to feel small, powerless, and alone. What's worse, many aspects of our daily lives - work, geography, even our communication platforms - seem to drive us away from each other. I believe we are called to resist this tide of isolation and exclusion, and nurture an intentional, radical community of love. I was recently reminded that our church is a global family; I want to live that truth.



Deanery/Diocesan Delegate
Sandra De Hart-Mayor

Please refer to the bio in the Vestry candidate section above.



Deanery/Diocesan Delegate
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.

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

Since Covid I have seen a beautiful rebirth of our church community. We are re-examining why and how we do Church. We are asking ourselves why do we come together and what do we want of our time together and most importantly do the old church engagement models still fit or do we need to explore different options. I love that we are exploring change as an imperfectly perfect community. I see the years ahead as an exciting time of growth, change, hope and love.



Deanery/Diocesan Delegate
Hannah Moderow

Tell us about yourself:

I'm a lifelong Alaskan and have been a part of the St. Mary's community since 2008. I'm a writer, dog-lover, reader, outdoor enthusiast, mom to Matilda and Max, and wife to Erik.

With the support of St. Mary's, I was ordained a deacon in the Episcopal Church in December 2024, and I have been serving on St. Mary's staff for the past year in that role.

I have a deep love for Scripture and preaching, and I am especially attracted to intergenerational ministry. When I first came to St. Mary's in my 20s, I was involved in Youth Ministry for many years and served on the vestry from 2013-2017. Some of my best early memories of St. Mary's include conversations with youth while flipping pancakes for parish breakfasts. I appreciate the light-hearted joy mixed with reverence that you can find just about everywhere at St. Mary's.

I'm currently in my final semester of seminary at Vancouver School of Theology and will graduate with a Masters in Divinity in May 2026.

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

"All are welcome." These words that we speak together each week capture what I love most about St. Mary's. Since first walking through the doors in 2008, I have found it to be a place of wise, open-minded, prayerful, inclusive, and encouraging people. St. Mary's has shown me, over and over again, that **All** are truly, completely, fully welcome. And not just welcome to come inside the church and have a place at the table, but welcome and loved by God.



Deanery/Diocesan Delegate
Ross McKay

Tell us about yourself: My name is Ross McKay. I am a Husband, Father, and a Deacon 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
Joel Bertrand

Tell us about yourself:

My name is Joel Bertrand, and I am, by profession, an airline pilot. I have been attending St. Mary's with my family for almost four years now.

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

I really value the warmth of the faith community at St. Mary's. That's what brought us back the second week after we first visited here. This is a community that really means what they say in their core values and that's really noticeable.

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

I think the whole landscape of faith communities is changing right now. I think it is important for us to stand up and simply be who we are. We need to make our presence known, that we hold certain values from our faith, and to represent those values as best we can, as we live them out in the community around us.



Deanery/Diocesan Delegate
Adam Lees

Tell us about yourself:

Since 2014 when I came to Alaska, I have worshipped here at St. Mary's and found my first family-away-from-family, which helped me stay in Alaska once my temp job ended. I work now as a finance and operations admin for the Presbyterian Church (USA), study accounting at UAA, just moved to Spenard, and serve as the diocesan historian currently leading research efforts into church complicity in the Boarding Schools movement. I have served as a diocesan/deanery delegate since 2016, even serving 4 years as Dean of Southcentral.

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

I love the people. Even when the weather is horrible and I am physically and/or emotionally exhausted, I can pull myself out of bed for the folks I worship and share fellowship with.

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

I think God is, in a way, going to "expect more" of us (really, the expectation is the same, but

it'll feel like more). For many, this is a dark(er) time; for some, that is a major understatement. The church is called to be a light shining in darkness, the shining city on a hill, not out of a sense of arrogant superiority but as a place of love and refuge. This is coming as everyone is being stretched thin financially, emotionally, even spiritually. We will have to lean together as we move out into the world because the work, while sacred, is too much for one person to bear.

Is there something else you would like to add?

Yep: why I am standing for this specific position. After all, you don't need to be elected to anything to value this place and discern a communal call. Admittedly, I am a church nerd and one of my strongest ministries is governance & administration, which is at the heart of serving as a delegate. Although there are (lots of) spreadsheets, policies, and rules of order, it's nonetheless also a ministry of prayer and discernment.



Candidate for Thomas Center Board



Thomas Center for Senior Leadership Board, Seat A
Maggie McKay

This position is a two-year full term.

Please refer to the bio in the Diocesan and Deanery candidate section above.



Thomas Center for Senior Leadership Board, Seat B
Jonathan Brower

This position is a one-year partial term.

Tell us about yourself:

I am passionate about stories and believe our stories provide the materials for individual transformation, as well as serving as the key to collective understanding and empathetic regard for one another. I've stitched together a life's work employed in the service of story in a variety of capacities.

I'm employed full-time as a clinical therapist in Anchorage, where I run a private practice serving adults, teens, and couples navigating a wide variety of concerns and relationship challenges. I also engage in freelance writing projects as the spirit moves and as my obsessions demand. Last but not least, making music and recording songs remains an ongoing source of deep meaning and joy in a world that can often seem intent on challenging the possibility that either is possible.

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

I continue to appreciate St. Mary's presence in the Anchorage community and church's engagement with the most relevant social issues and needs facing us today. I also deeply value (and love) St. Mary's commitment to making all who find their way to the church welcome and seen, and integral to the ongoing process of St. Mary's becoming what it needs to become in Alaska.

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

I believe that as a species we have been called in our era to "think smaller" than we have become accustomed to thinking and living, and I believe that "community" is the name and shape of our collective future and survival. St. Mary's has an opportunity serving Alaska and representing, modeling, and functioning as a community of faith responding to the unique needs and challenges facing local residents and issues here.

