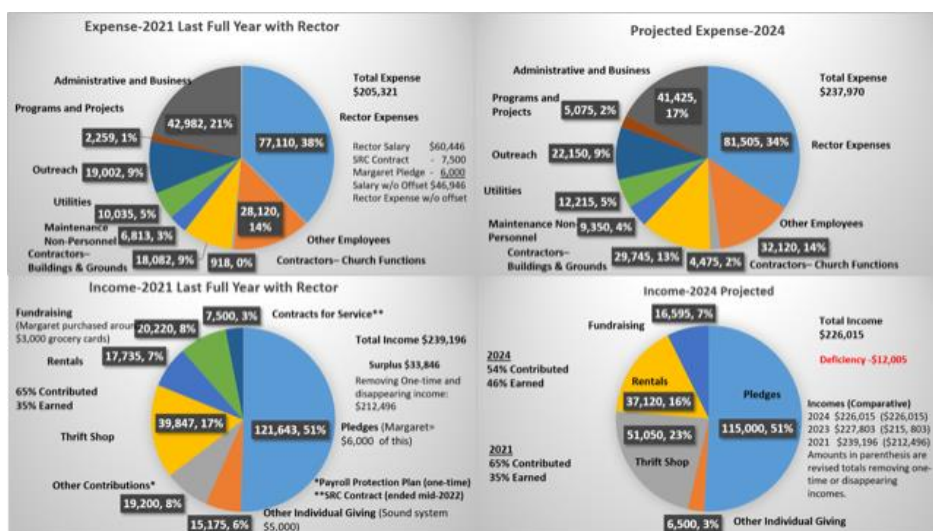


Dear fellow Messiah members,

Kathy gave an excellent summation of where we are and where we need to be with our pledges and why we are asking for everyone to think prayerfully about the importance of how much you pledge. The median pledge at Messiah is \$1,800 and several have not increased their pledge for several years. We were very fortunate to have Margaret with us and to have the advantage of both her and Mike being on Medicare which allowed us to save on their medical expenses, their very generous pledge and the money that SRC paid to Messiah to cover the time she devoted to them. Now that we are in our stewardship campaign it is time to share our new reality. Whether you were able to hear Kathy's talk or not, John as our treasurer, has made a wonderful narrative budget and written a summation to help us all see and understand more clearly where our pledges and other income come from and where it is spent. I trust this will help each of you come to a better understanding. **John has offered to meet with anyone on a Zoom on Thursday November 14th at 7:45pm. Please feel free to reach out to us directly if you have questions or concerns and let us know if you would like to attend the Zoom question and answer time.** Below please find John's narrative budget graphs and summation:



Our 2024 Income is projected pretty much the same as the final projected for this year (\$226,015). If we compare it with 2021 (\$239,136), it seems higher on the surface, but there are a number of "hidden subsidies" in the totals. You will see that in 2021, our pledge numbers were higher. If we remove Margaret's pledge, however, pledging is the same as 23-24. Fundraising was also higher in 2021, but this is mostly due to Margaret's purchase of grocery cards with Rector's Discretionary Fund money. Removing that brings us very close to the 23-24 number. Other Individual Giving was also higher than 23-24, but \$5,000 was for the sound system purchase. \$19,200 was the one-time Payroll Protection Plan funds, and \$7500 was the SRC Contract with Margaret which will not be feasible with a new rector split between two churches.

The 2023 & 2024 income schemes are much more solid. There are no one-time or disappearing funding sources in the mix. There are no hidden subsidies. Our rental income is \$20,000 more than in 2021, and Thrift Shop income is \$11,000 higher than 2021 numbers. In 2021, our Earned Income was 35% of our total budget, in 2023 it is 44%. Pledges and Fundraising are essentially flat from 2021 (removing Margaret's contributions). Individual giving is the only negative (down \$3,500, removing

the 2021 sound system). If we remove the one-time and disappearing income from 2021, that year's income was \$212,496. The income for 2023 and 2024 is \$226,000 clear.

However, we have more expenses. On the surface, comparative rector expenses in 2021 and 2024 show only a \$4,400 difference, but we have to keep in mind that Margaret did not take a pension or have a medical plan, and her salary was offset by the contract with the SRC and her own pledge. We have none of these options with a potential new priest, even with the split. After offsets, the 2021 Rector's Expense was \$63,610, 2024 projections are \$81,505.

Additionally, we have to budget for possible supply clergy/deacon costs, continuing buildings and grounds projects, additional utilities if a new priest chooses to live in our rectory, additional pledge dollars to the Diocese (attached to our increased income), and some program and project expansion. Total expenses with a conservative budget come to \$237,970. This is the highest expense budget in the history of The Church of the Messiah (but only by about \$5,000, second highest was in 2017).

The good news is that the shortfall with the solid income forecasts is only \$12,000. A 10% increase in 2023 pledge amounts comes very close to closing the gap. Our average pledge in 2023 was \$2,538 and as stated earlier, the median is \$1,800. The 10% increase represents \$245 per household, or \$20 per month. 2024 pledges would then average \$2,783.

I referenced the state and national average pledge amounts from the General Convention of the Episcopal Church website. The average pledge for the State of New Jersey in 2022 was \$2,891, the national average was \$3,628. The average increase in pledges in New Jersey from 2018-2022 was 28%, the national increase was 23%. Pledges increased in New Jersey 14% from 2021 to 2022. Pledges at COM have essentially remained flat. Given our circumstances, and the reality of inflation, we do need to think of an increase, here, regardless of our success in raising earned income.

Please consider your pledge prayerfully. **As you see in John's summation if everyone was able to increase their pledge by 10% that would help us make our budget and comfortably afford a new priest.** After prayerful consideration of your pledge if you are comfortable we ask that you return your pledge this Sunday, but by November 19th at the latest.

Thank you.

We are Rooted in Abundance,  
Debbie and Merica  
[debbieburnet@att.net](mailto:debbieburnet@att.net) for questions or concerns