



Church of the Good Shepherd

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Parish Profile September 2025



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Welcome

We are The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Punta Gorda, Florida; members of The Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida, a diverse diocese with varied gifts and approximately 28,000 members. Our diocese has 78 parishes, missions, and worshipping communities that extend along the Gulf of Mexico. Punta Gorda is a historic small town that lies as a “Fat Point,” jutting out into Charlotte Harbor. Our church was established in 1896 and our Day School was founded in 1963, giving us a long-standing history within the community and city of which we are proud. We come together as a worshipping community to share a portrait of who we are and who we are becoming, with prayerful hope that our story is a beacon that calls each of us and you into faithful ministry together.

Church of the Good Shepherd’s mission is to proclaim the power of God’s love for all people through worship, word, and deed. We remain committed to strengthening our faith community and neighbors with the love and grace we, ourselves, have received from our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We are a community comforted by things known and familiar to us, and yet challenged with a longing to make a difference in our community and the world. We have many varied gifts that need love, guidance, and direction so that we can live fully into who we are being created to be, knowing that in giving, what we receive in return, is life-giving and unimaginable.

It is with prayer and hopeful anticipation that we come together to share this portrait of who we are, who we have been, and who we are becoming with God’s help, Jesus’ example, and the Spirit’s guidance. We share our story with hope and faith that we will be found by a rector with pastoral

gifts that can strengthen us in unity and strategically help us navigate faithfully through an evolving, ever-changing world.

Our History



The history of the Episcopal Church in Charlotte County, Florida can be traced back to the 1880s, when Mrs. Virginia Trabue, the wife of our community's founder, Col. Isaac Trabue, requested Bishop William Gray, the Missionary Bishop of South Florida, to make arrangements for Episcopal services in the town.

Early services were held in the Community Church until January 1893, when Bishop Gray met with Episcopalians in the community to establish a mission and select property for the church building. Albert Walter Gilchrist, who would become Governor of Florida in 1909, came forward and donated land on the corner of what is now West Virginia Street and State Route 41 South (Cross Street). The committee selected the name St. James for the new mission.

The Colt family, a wealthy family that wintered in Punta Gorda from Hartford, CT., donated \$1,000 for the construction of the first church building. This amount reportedly bought every



piece of lumber for the new church. The tragic drowning in Charlotte Harbor of their son, Caldwell Hart Colt, in 1894, prompted Mrs. Colt to donate the Tiffany Chancel Window of The Good Shepherd, which still serves as a focal point in the chancel area of the church to this day. It was apparently this gift that moved the mission church to change the name, at her request, to The Church of the Good Shepherd. The

first building was consecrated on January 25, 1896 by Bishop Gray.

The years that followed were full of changes, many of them brought on by hurricanes. In 1896, a hurricane blew the nave into the churchyard, and the belfry was thrown into the street. During a storm in 1926, the bell tower was damaged and had to be re-built. Punta Gorda remained a small community until after World War II. During this period of time, Good Shepherd had a succession of priests who served for short periods of time and in between their tenures, the church remained

closed. In June 1945, the church reopened and was served by a succession of priests until April 1948, when The Rev. John E.M. Massie became Vicar of Good Shepherd. He also served St. Andrew, Boca Grande and St. Edmund Martyr, Arcadia, where he resided.

In February 1958, The Rev. J. Saxton Wolfe became the first resident priest at Good Shepherd since 1938. His stay was brief. In 1959, The Rev. James D.B. Hubbs, a native of Geneva, New York was appointed Vicar and shepherded the church during its early years of rapid growth. In the mid 1960s Good Shepherd was admitted as a parish and Father Hubbs became its first Rector. This was a time of continued growth and Good Shepherd was responsible for the formation of two mission congregations, St. James, Port Charlotte and St. Nathaniel's, North Port. The Good Shepherd Day School was also founded in 1963.

During the 1970s growth continued at a rapid pace in Charlotte County and new church facilities were needed. In 1978 Good Shepherd broke ground at its present location with construction beginning during the summer of 1979. The current facilities were consecrated on May 23, 1980 by Bishop E. Paul Haynes. The interior of the church is in the architecture style known as "Carpenter Gothic" and, whenever possible, furnishings of the former church were integrated into the new sanctuary.

In 1988 a new organ was purchased, adding the beauty and sound of real pipes for the very first time. In June 1998 Good Shepherd completed a three-year expansion program, adding more than 10,000 square feet of needed space and facilities.

In 2004, Hurricane Charlie devastated the area, including Church of the Good Shepherd, requiring expansive repair and renovation to the altar and the purchase of a new organ.

In 2017, the area was devastated again, by Hurricane Irma and in 2022 we were hit with Hurricane Ian. These were hard hits, taking years to complete the repairs and renovations for many in our community and church. Most recently, our

community sustained significant surge damage from Hurricanes Milton and Helene in 2024, causing many to lose everything in their homes.

Church of the Good Shepherd has survived many storms. We are survivors, guided to peace and safety, finding security in the One after whom we are named. Thanks be to God.



Our columbarium in the chapel after Hurrigan Ian 2022

Who We Are



We are a worshipping community that values a clearly defined faith, structure, and stability. Faith is central to our identity. We are traditional in nature, theologically conservative, and yet able to make room for and welcome varied beliefs and spirituality. Being friendly and sharing genuine care and concern for others, we are prepared to welcome those from many different walks of life into our midst. We enjoy

welcoming people and creating an environment for all to come as they are.

We are guardians of time-honored tradition and motivated by life-long formation, yet challenged in finding ways to reach outside of our worshipping community to offer our gifts in the world. We are excited by the idea of living out our mission in new ways that connect us to the culture and needs of our greater community and world.

The music ministry at Good Shepherd is growing and is vital to our spiritual connection and well-being. We are grateful for our music director, who has been with us for 2 years. This has brought us joy, hope, gratitude, and renewal within the liturgy.

Some of our other liturgical ministries include:

Acolytes

Eucharist Ministers

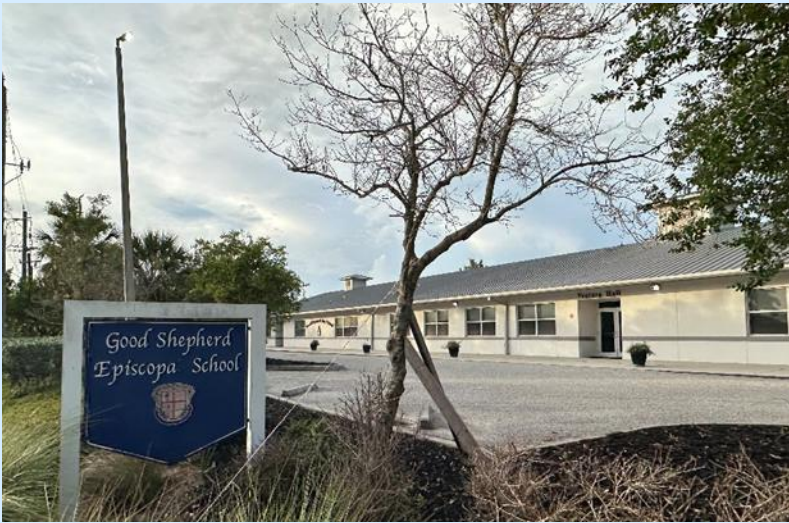
Lectors/Readers

Ushers

Greeters

Altar Guild

In the Fall of 2021, we began using Godly Play for our children and youth formation. We are blessed to have several certified Godly Play story tellers who are passionate about sharing sacred stories with our children and youth on Sundays after the 10 o'clock service and with our VPK (voluntary pre-kindergarten) students at the Day School on Thursdays.



Our primary outreach is our Good Shepherd Day School founded in 1963. The Day School serves children from infancy through VPK. It is dedicated to meeting the needs

of children and families by providing a safe, nurturing, developmentally appropriate environment that fosters active, age-appropriate spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development in a faith-based setting.

We have various small groups, allowing us to bond and go deeper in worship and service as a community.

Men's Club – for those who enjoy completing projects around the church. They work on designated days fixing things that contribute to a better church life for all. They also serve the congregation with a monthly community breakfast.

Women's groups

Daughters of the King – Our daughters offer aid to the clergy and parish to spread Christ's Kingdom.

Women's Ministry – Our vision for the women of the Episcopal Church is to help provide vibrant programs and missions for women of all ages coming together as a peace making part of the church.

Bible Study – Our Bible Study meets on Friday mornings in the Craft Room. We welcome those that are new to Bible study as well as those more experienced. We are lay led and share thoughts and insights of what each passage means for our lives.

Lectionary Study – Our lectionary study meets between the 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Sunday services in the Craft Room to share and discuss the readings each week.

Yexercise – Created for our community by our resident instructor Andrea, Yexercise is a combined yoga and traditional exercise class. Our bodies are made to be in motion. As we age, we tend to lose sight of the precious gift of our bodies and health. This is a free exercise class that meets in the Great Hall on Tuesdays at 5:15PM and every other Saturday. Participate at your own level. All are welcome to share fellowship while learning to take care of the gift of our bodies.

Prayer Ministry – All are welcome to receive a prayer for blessing and healing after Communion in the chapel with our prayer team.

Sharing a Table – We are a community that thrives on connecting over a shared meal. We have a monthly breakfast group, ladies' night dinners, and monthly dinner functions for the whole parish as a way of having fun, being together, and raising money.



As a community, we believe ministry is serving others in the name of Jesus Christ, both inside and outside of the church. While our primary outreach is the Good Shepherd Day School, there are many ministries that we participate in including but not limited to:

Charlotte CARE Center – formerly known as Charlotte County Homeless Coalition, is a point of entry for homeless services. This Emergency Shelter is open 365 days a year.

Virginia B. Andes Community Clinic – a volunteer clinic that provides primary and semi-urgent wellness services at no cost to qualifying residents in need.

Praying Through Ministries – provides fervent prayer, resources and on-going support to families navigating the dark seasons of pregnancy loss, infertility, childhood illness and child loss.

C.A.R.E. Victim Services Center – Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies assists victims of crime by influencing public awareness, as well as advancing educational and victim service programs.

Peace River Wildlife Center – A member of Florida Wildlife Rehabilitation Association (FWRA) and the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association (NWRA), they have a wildlife rehabilitation and education center as well as a hospital that accepts wildlife intakes 365 days a year. PRWC admits over 2,500 patients a year. If an animal cannot be returned to its natural habitat after treatment and recovery, but is otherwise healthy, it could become a resident of the center or other federal and state approved facility.

Backpack Kidz – Feeding hungry children in Charlotte County one food filled bag at a time. Many children do not have a stable source of food except for the free or

reduced meals provided by the schools. Backpack Kidz bridges the gap by providing bags filled with nutritious food items every weekend of the school year.

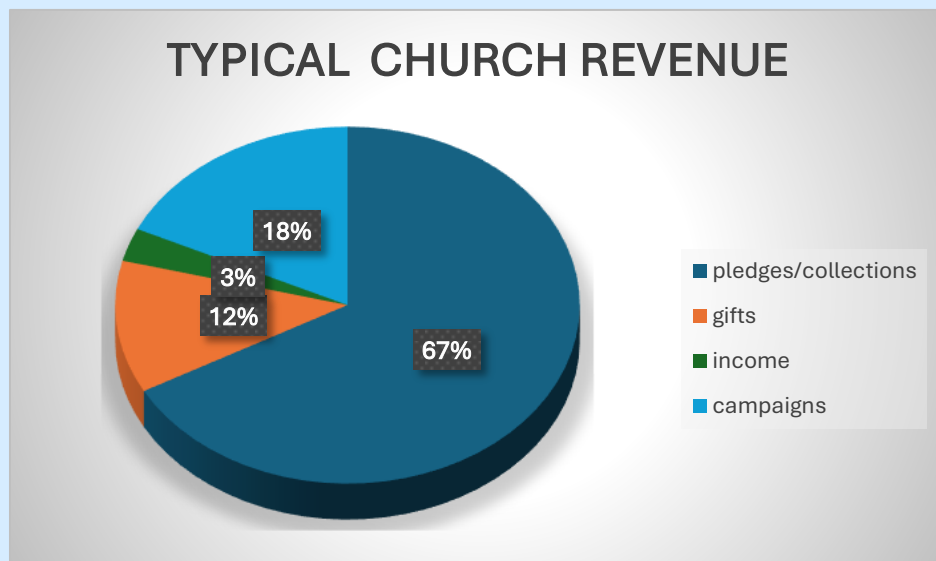
Anglican Social Center – We have partnered with the Diocese of Brasilia (Brazil) in supporting the center which provides tutoring and more individualized instruction for literacy, technology, math, and writing. The center also offers classes and community for women who desire to gain skills in order to find employment. Most recently, in May 2025 we sent a team of missionaries there to visit and help with this work.

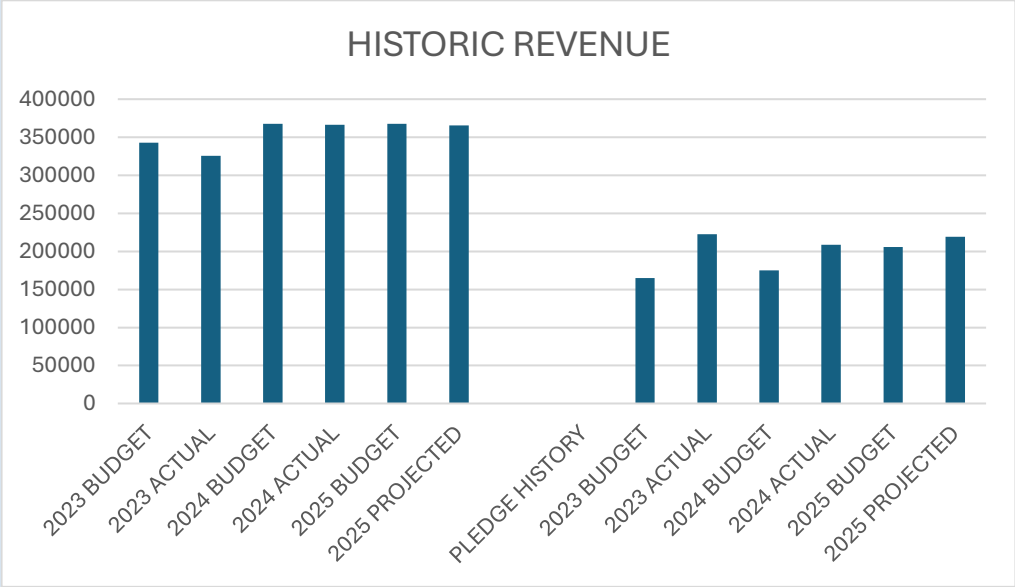
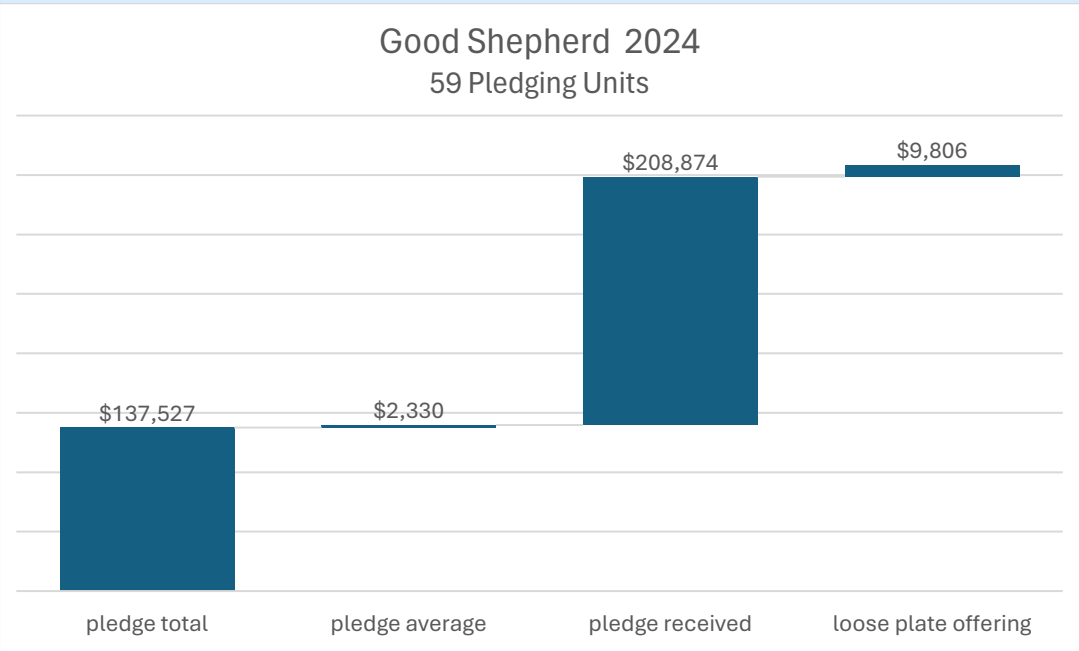


Anglican Social Center, Diocese of Brasilia visit 2025

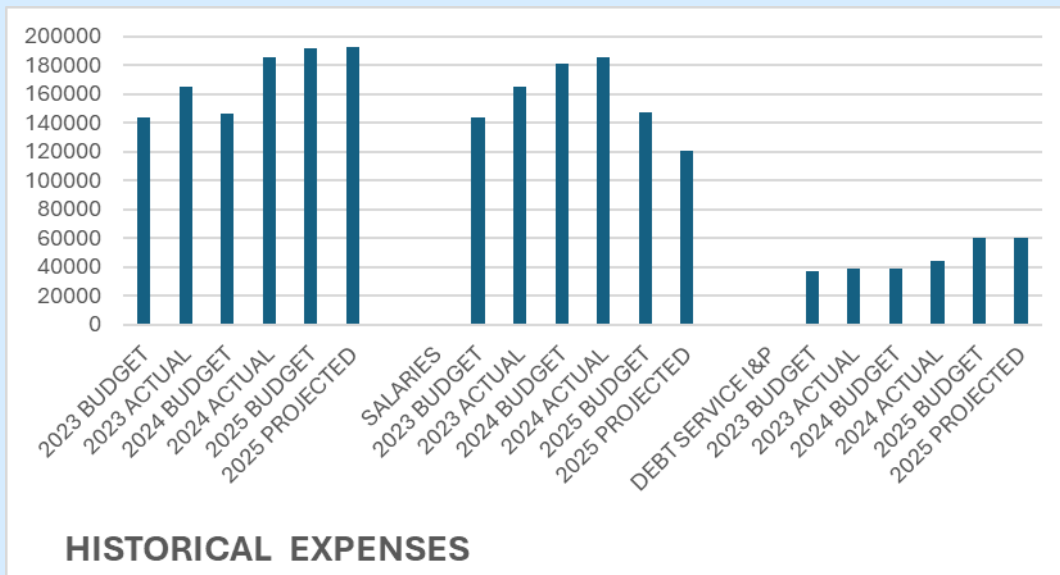
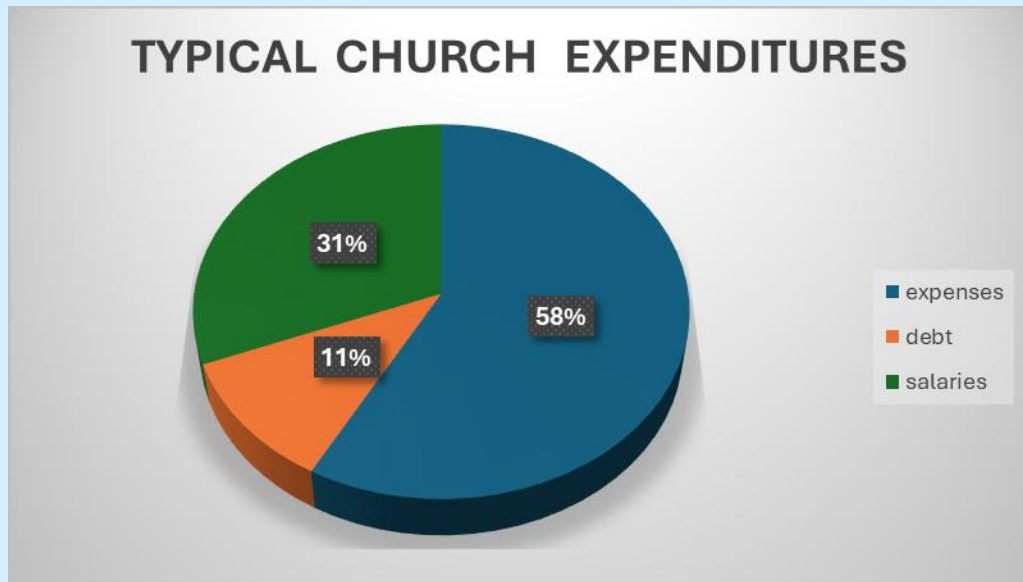
Our Finances

The past few years have been challenging for our church and school. The good news is that we have continued to meet our obligations and commitments while battling several hurricanes that have left us, like all Floridians, with increased costs including insurance and utilities. While we do conduct an annual stewardship campaign, we use a soft approach, conscious of the fact that 85% of our church family is over the age of 65, many of whom are on fixed incomes. We are blessed that our revenue is not strictly dependent on pledges, even though stewardship is important to us.

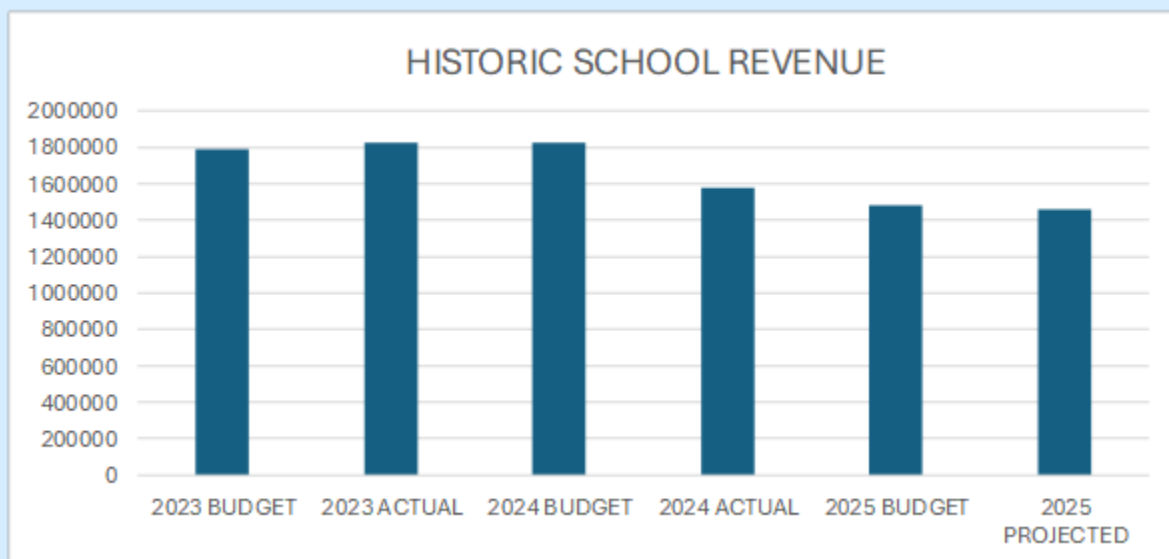
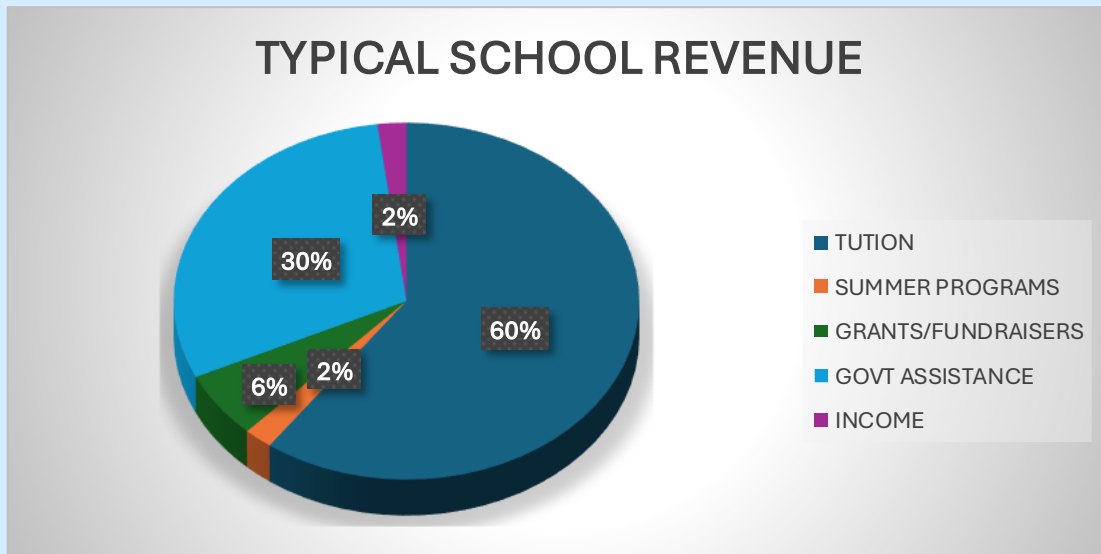




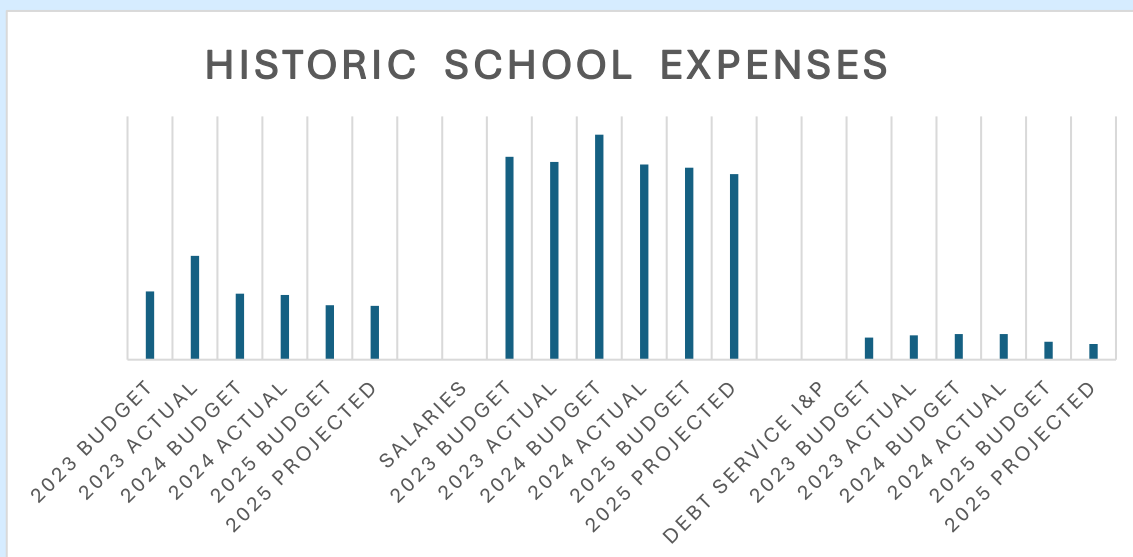
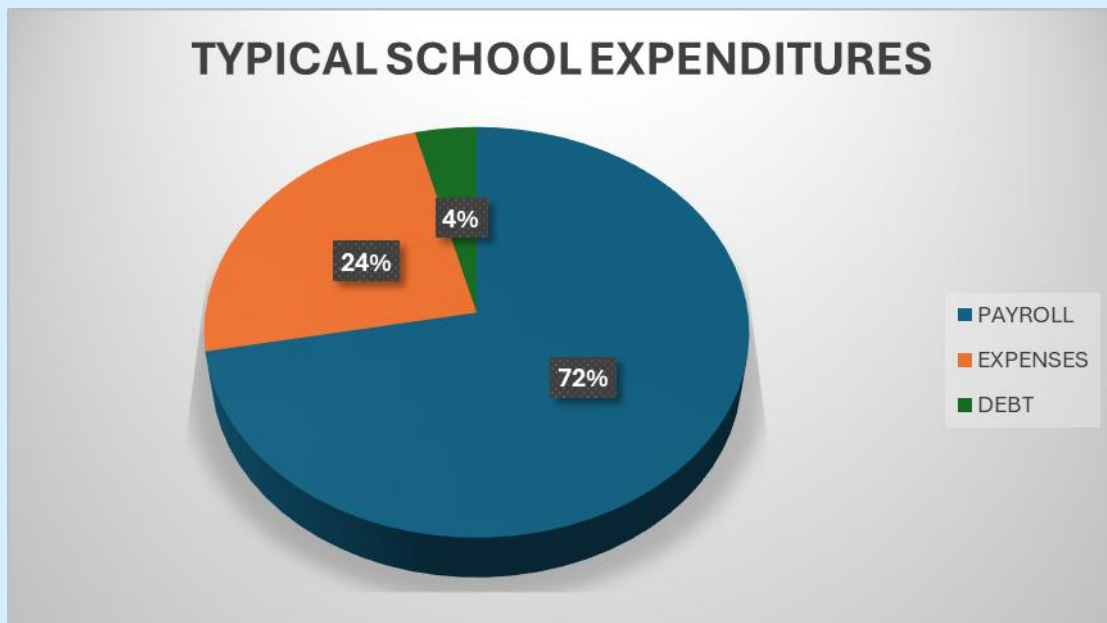
Our expenses were high over the past few years, but hurricane damage was not fully recovered by insurance, and we had to extend ourselves both financially and physically, while continuing to meet our obligations and commitments.



Our Good Shepherd Day School has faced many challenges similar to the church, with the added need to be mindful for the safety and care of those entrusted to us. Unlike the church, we have several revenue streams to support our earnings (tuition, grants, fundraisers, summer programs and Florida State government assistance programs). Not unlike other schools and day care centers, our attendance varies depending on the time of year and weather, although we do average about 120 students per year and we have won many awards in our community.



School expenses are dependent on qualified/certified teachers and administrators, so salaries and wages are the largest expense. A great deal of our budget is committed to the expense of healthy meals and snacks for our children.



Who We Seek



We are a worshipping community whose faith is central to our lives. That being said, we are comfortable with things just as they are, yet fully aware that we must grow in our community with innovation and change. The climate of our church is what might be called “reinvention.” We are seeking to renew ourselves around a compelling mission with targeted strategies that will move us to become more transformational in nature. We are seeking a faithful pastor willing to journey with us through these challenges, while fostering our strengths. We trust our candidness in sharing who we are, calls a rector with excitement for the opportunities these challenges bring, and an ability to nurture our community in teasing out, together, a vision of who we are called to be.

We envision a collaborative leader who understands the complexities of guiding us, gradually but intentionally, toward the future while appreciating our history and heritage. We believe with patience, proper guidance, wisdom, and continued presence of the Spirit, we will thrive, learning to live out our values and mission in new ways that connect us to the needs of our community and culture.

It would be a gift to have a pastor who is familiar with family systems, willing to engage and challenge us in resolving conflicts respectfully, preserving the dignity of all. We are imperfect people beloved by God who experience conflict within our community. We hope to find someone with keen pastoral gifts, presence, and care to guide us strategically in creative and innovative ways that foster connection and the sharing of our stories.

We need a faithful steward with financial acumen, who is comfortable discussing financial matters with parishioners, and willing to collaborate with the laity in creating a culture of generosity. We believe with guidance and direction toward mission, our stewardship will flourish. We are aware this will require strong strategic leadership and cooperation.

We are praying for a teacher who empowers and helps us accept the changes necessary for growth in Christ and unity with each other, that understands change in our context must be planned, intentional, and applied at a modest pace. Our worshipping community values life-long learning and formation and hope you do too. We eagerly anticipate exploring new programming and sharing the ministry with you.

We are a strong and loving church family who are comforted by things known and familiar to us, faithfully calling a new rector, to help us continue to meet the challenges that allow us to have an impact in our modern world.

Our Staff



The Rev. Canon Patricia Powers

Priest-in-Residence

A native of Ohio, The Rev. Canon Patricia Powers served as a missionary in Brazil for 23 years. After her return to the United States, she served as a rector at St. Nathaniel's Church in North Port for 12 years before retiring in 2012.

Anne-Marie Wiley

Parish Secretary

Anne-Marie joined our staff in May 2025. Originally from Michigan, she relocated to Florida in 2000. She has 2 children and 3 grandchildren that she enjoys spending any free time she has with.



Jerilyn Schnitzel, CHAE, CHTP, CAM

Treasurer

Jerilyn's current role as treasurer started in 2022. She is a lifelong Episcopalian and has been a member of the Church of the Good Shepherd since 1987. Jerilyn and her husband, Greg, were married at the church in 1990. She has served in many capacities over the years as Sunday school teacher, youth group leader, assistant treasurer/bookkeeper, treasurer, and vestry member.

Isaac James

Music Director

Isaac joined our staff in August 2023. A lifelong musician, he is a classical pianist, choral director, conductor, and church organist who began playing by ear at age six and entered his first international competition at sixteen. Isaac also serves as the Executive Director of the Military Heritage Museum and the Vice President of the Board of Directors for Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce.



Milton (Jim) J. Eisenhauer, Jr.

Sexton

Jim is a retired master pipefitter from Boston, Massachusetts who enjoyed snow-birding on Cocoa Beach from 2016-2019. He relocated to Punta Gorda Isles in December 2019 to be closer to his two adult children. He enjoys waterfront living, boating, and traveling both domestically and abroad. He joined our staff part-time in February 2022.

Angela Benevides

Preschool Director

Good Shepherd Day School

Angie is creative, enthusiastic, and passionate about the development of young minds. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood leadership and over 30 years of experience. She strives to create an environment for play-based learning that is Christ centered, warm, inviting, and inclusive. Her goal is to provide a place where children feel secure in their learning and exploration.



Our Leadership



Our Vestry

Front – Jamie Bradsher, Winnie Mechem

Back – Alan Garrison, Dennis Hanson, Randy Simpson, Terry Huntzicker



Dennis Hanson

Senior Warden

Dennis was raised by parents who taught the value and importance of volunteering through words and actions. He spent twelve years volunteering with the National Parks in many capacities. He believes it is a gift to serve and that serving our brothers, sisters, and church is a gift to us all. Dennis would like to encourage everyone to think of ways to volunteer, making the world a little better.



Randy Simpson

Junior Warden

A life-long resident of Charlotte County, Randy first came to Good Shepherd as a parent whose children went to our school. Having God bless him in his life; he wants to share his blessings by doing more in service to the church.



Christina (Chris) Vasquez

Godly Play Host

From Chicago, Chris moved to Punta Gorda with her family in 2020. She is married and has a 10-year-old son. She has always found a home in church and is passionate about Christian formation and journeying with others. She coordinates our yearly curriculum for children and youth as well as VPK Godly Play at the Day School. In her spare time, she loves to sing, read, and travel.

Application Process

Contact: The Rev. Canon Richard Norman

Phone: (941) 556-0315

email: rnorman@episcopalswfl.org

Application Process:

If you discern that God may be calling you to an exciting and life-giving ministry with the Church of the Good Shepherd, please submit the following materials to the Rev'd Canon Richard H. Norman, Canon to the Ordinary, The Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida (rnorman@episcopalswfl.org):

- Resume/c.v.
- A copy of your updated OTM profile
- A letter of interest that highlights how you feel you meet the needs of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd

Application Deadline:

December 15, 2025