

Ministry Portfolio (St. Patrick's Episcopal Church)

NARRATIVE (1200-character limit including punctuation and spaces)

1. Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry which you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.

While our community has had several successful and fulfilling ministries the largest and most long-lived mission in our portfolio is our day school. During the pandemic our school was only closed for a short period of time and opened as soon as possible for parents that were essential employees. The school provides care for over 100 children and has been operating for almost 40 years. Early childhood learning may not carry the heady allure of healing the sick or feeding the homeless, but it does have a weighty impact on families and children. Our facility has the reputation for providing loving, God-centered care that is unparalleled in the community. There is no greater feeling of success and fulfillment than seeing a child laugh and know that they are loved, safe, and in good care.

2. Describe your liturgical style & practice. If your community provides more than one type of worship service, please describe all:

We have been strictly Rite II for the last several years. Some say we are high church, but many say we are too casual to be high church. Maybe "High Church Lite"...bells and smells on special occasions, and weekly Gospel procession with bells. No guitars, but some say they would welcome a little diversity in the worship offerings. Currently we offer one worship service on Sunday morning.

3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Methods of involving people in particular ministries vary according to the situation. We have a corps of lay ministers for worship services, lectors, acolytes, intercessors, ushers, and altar guild; however, if someone expresses a desire to participate, he or she is gladly accepted and worked into the rotation. Other missions often require an active search for people to serve. This may begin with a simple announcement in church that a particular need has presented itself and asking for prayerful consideration. A quiet networking campaign may then ensue, culminating in the clergy or a vestry member directly and personally inviting individuals to serve.

4. As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

St. Patrick's Pastoral Care Team and our congregation are great at supporting our church and community. During Covid and continuing, the Pastoral Care Team makes calls to all parishioners not only to check if there are any pastoral needs, but also to make a wellness check and offer prayers where needed. Being a smaller congregation, we are very tight knit and offer assistance to any member in need.

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5. Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region.

Pre-Covid, St. Patrick's youth celebrated the Eucharist one week every month at the Oakwood Senior Living facility in Zachary. We regularly support the Zachary Food Pantry, provide school uniforms for needy children, and annually provide Christmas gifts for needy families in the area. Blessing of the Backpacks and Blessing of the Pets are annual events offered to the community. For Lent, we administer Ashes to Go at local coffee shops and assist with Friday Fish Fries put on by the Zachary Police Department. This year we participated in the City of Zachary's first Trunk-or-Treat event. We enter a float in the Zachary Christmas parade each year. Our congregation and community have come together to aid the communities impacted by Hurricanes Laura, Sally, and Ida by sending multiple trailer loads full of needed supplies to the affected areas. During the month of October, we host the St. Patrick's Pumpkin Patch, closing with the Pumpkin Fest. Our Outreach Committee offers Wednesday night Meals to Go periodically throughout the year to day school families and a New Year's Health and Prosperity Meal on New Year's Day. Our Pastoral Care Team administers Communion to Go upon request. Martin Hall and our church library are meeting locations for various groups including Adult Bible Study, local Boy and Girl Scouts Troops, sewing and craft classes, and youth events.

6. How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?

Our former rector was involved in a handful of pastoral care cases which involved people from outside of our worshipping community, which due to confidentiality cannot be commented on. We do get requests to baptize, marry, and bury those from outside of our church. We exercise pastoral care through the administration of the Discretionary Fund and the Lay Pastoral Care Team to handle all requests, including Communion to Go.

7. Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted about this?

Like most churches, Covid put a halt to the ministries in our church and unfortunately, the ministries we were working on lost momentum. We are continually trying to incorporate youth ministry. Over the past year we have had multiple youth events including Martin Hall Matinees with holiday films, Easter Egg decorating, and Christmas Caroling. The Adult Bible Study group meets on Wednesday nights and there is a Men's Group meeting on Thursday mornings at a local eatery for coffee and fellowship. Our Women's Group, The Colleens, meets periodically for fellowship with refreshments. Contact the Senior Warden for information.

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8. How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?

During this process of searching for a new rector, we have tried to identify what our church's predominant demographics hopefully will be in ten years or so vis-a-vis the predominant demographics at the present and include comparable people in the search process. We are trending toward a younger, more racially and economically diverse congregation with more children than we have now. In preparation, and in order to facilitate the trend, we try to include younger parishioners in ministries; vestry, Christian formation, etc., and incorporate their ideas into the operation of the church.

9. What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?

Stewardship has been a challenge in the administration of this church. This is not a tithing congregation, though there are some who do tithe. A church of our size should be self-sufficient, but we are not. We rely on revenue from the preschool to supplement pledges and cover the operational needs of the church. Fortunately, the school is doing well financially. The church would be able to do significantly more mission outreach with a viable stewardship program.

10. What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?

We have not had a significant conflict in our congregation in many years and are fortunate to have a strong relationship with The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana. Like many churches we have had casualties both because we were not liberal enough and because we were not conservative enough. Today's congregation of St. Patrick's tend to be about worship, outreach, fellowship, and striving to follow the example of Christ.

11. What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

Willingness to change is a prerequisite to growth. Not just growth in size or numbers, but growth in the sense of maturing, of recognizing opportunity for development, of realizing one season has passed and it is time to enter into a new season. Willingness to change is knowing that life well lived, even the life of a church, is life in process. Resistance to change is life lived in fear. Like most churches, we have affected countless changes over the years, some as small as changing service times or bulletin formats; others as large as renovating the entire sanctuary. Change generally goes well when there is a bona fide need for it, when it is well and positively explained to the congregation beforehand, the congregation is engaged, and the process of change is open and transparent.

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12. Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.

“Seek first the kingdom of God...” may be the most profound words in the entire Bible. No one ever said that they attend a particular church because the rector is such a great administrator. All of us seek to be closer to God, perhaps to glimpse the Kingdom Jesus spoke about so often; to resolve our lack of faith; to “level-up” on our reliance of the Holy Spirit; to overcome our fear, guilt, and doubt; and to learn to love. You must also be on that journey, and this much more: that you yearn to teach others what you have learned along the way, that you want to inspire others to seek and keep seeking, that you believe the promises Jesus made to us and want to live them out in your life and lead us along the way. If these things are so, everything else will fall into place.