

Diocesan Narrative: Christ Episcopal Church, Rockville, Maryland

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

Approximately four years ago, an Anglican priest from a war torn African country arrived on the steps of our church. After living in Rockville for some time, he approached members of the church, both lay and clergy, asking for help in bringing his family to the United States, as they were in fear for their safety. The church responded by purchasing airline tickets for all seven children and their mother. Once the family was together again, there were significant challenges that needed to be addressed. Members of the church came together to provide a suitable environment for the family to begin a new life. This included arranging housing, helping with the cost of utilities, connecting with county family services, and enrolling the children in school. As a result, the family has integrated well and is thriving as a whole. All of the family members are either in school and or have employment. Several of the children are now acolytes and ushers, and two were confirmed at the National Cathedral.

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

We worship within the structures and teachings of the Episcopal Church, enjoying all of its rich liturgy. Our worship is traditional in many ways, but we are also comfortable and relaxed, often enjoying some light-hearted moments together. It is that combination of tradition and comfort that makes us a welcoming community.

We embrace the participation of both clergy and lay ministry in our worship. Lay participants exercise a vital role in assisting our priests and enhancing the quality of our worship.

Our worship services consist of both Rite I and Rite II. We have four weekly services, three on Sunday and one on Wednesday.

Our Sunday services include the following:

- **Holy Eucharist 7:45 am:** a contemplative service without music.
- **Holy Eucharist 9:00 am:** a service designed for families with children.
- **Holy Eucharist 11:00 am:** a more formal service with congregational and choral music led by the full Adult Choir.

The summer schedule from June through August includes the 7:45 am Eucharist and the 10 am Eucharist with music by the summer choir.

Our Wednesday services are held in the Chapel at 12:10 pm.

3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

We have an active Welcoming Committee that greets visitors on Sundays and presents newcomers to our parish at an annual Adult Forum. Our goal is for all parishioners, new and old, to find an area of ministry suited to each person's individual gifts and interests. To help achieve this goal we strive to keep parishioners informed by maintaining an attractive and accessible website, publishing our monthly newsletter (The Angelus), sending out weekly emails, and announcing upcoming events in our Sunday bulletins. We also have a Ministry Fair to inform parishioners about our ministries and encourage their involvement.

Our worship ministries, in addition to our choirs, include LLEMS, lectors, ushers, acolytes, greeters, counters, Altar Guild, and opportunities to lead children's worship or teach in Sunday School. Our outreach opportunities are many and diverse, and include Serving Others Sunday, English Conversation Group, and our thrift store, The Bargain Box. We have a vibrant and active Youth Group, and our adult educational programs include Sunday Adult Christian Formation, Studies in Christian Faith, and Faithful Professionals.

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

We are a caring and loving community. Our Pastoral Care Committee is very active in many ways, including praying for healing, and visiting and

worshipping with the sick and elderly. We support each other's physical needs through home visitations, at which time, our Christ Church Chefs provide meals for those parishioners experiencing illness or other family crises. Additionally, our Fellowship and Coffee Hour Committees consist of wonderfully caring people who host funeral receptions to assist and comfort the grieving, as well as, coffee hours that bring parishioners together in social settings. There is a sense of community and caring at these gatherings, which we carry into our personal lives. Our parishioners often minister to one another and provide service to their greater communities.

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

Christ Church is active locally through hunger relief programs: Diocesan Hunger Walk, Loaves and Fishes, Manna Food Center, and Serving Others Sunday, which provides 400 meals monthly for the homeless, and packs 300 weekend food baskets for a local school. All profits of The Bargain Box, our thrift store, are donated to local charities. Our church partners with Community Ministries of Rockville and Samaritan Ministries to provide housing, healthcare, education, and eldercare to the most vulnerable local residents. Several times a year the Youth Group, along with other parishioners, provides a complete meal for 60 members of the Rockville Women's Shelter. Our Youth Group also engages in monthly community service projects and conducts 3 mission trips yearly.

Environmental Stewardship and the St. Francis Flock bring focus to conserving our natural resources and the proper treatment of animals. We also have a shared ministry with Christ Episcopal School, a PreK-8th grade program that provides rigorous academics within the framework of a caring Christian community. We share both the church property and the school's mission of "inspiring minds to learn, hearts to love, hands to serve".

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

Our Pastoral Care Committee has one clear mission: to pray for people who have requested prayers for healing and/or special needs. The members of Pastoral Care also provide prayer shawls to the sick, and make regular visits to the nursing homes. Our LLEMs and clergy bring Holy Communion to our shut-ins. We also host a Friends of Christ Church Prayer list where parishioners can request prayers for others outside the Church community.

7. Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past 5 years. Who can be contacted about this project?

Environmental Stewardship and the St. Francis Flock were formed in 2012 to draw attention to conservation and animal welfare. Both groups focus on prayer, education, and activities that make a difference in our parish, communities, and Diocese.

The Environmental Stewardship Committee creates additions to the Prayers of the People, writes monthly newsletter contributions, prepared energy audits that were presented to Vestry, and participates in annual clean-up projects in local waterways. Additionally, volunteer gardeners are currently finishing up a 3-year landscaping project on the parish property. The St. Francis Flock educates us on the protection and care of animals. They sponsor pet adoptions, hold an annual Pet Memorial Service, organize Blessing of the Animals services, hold field trips to animal welfare organizations, and this year, hosted a Lenten Film Series on animal welfare issues. Collectively, these two committees strive to educate themselves and others so that we may use our resources rightly as the good stewards that God intends us to be.

Janice Musselman is the Chair for the Environmental Stewardship Committee and Lori Nicely is the Chair for the St. Francis Flock.

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

We begin this preparation by caring for and educating our children. We have a state-of-the-art nursery and nurture children through all manner of activities (acolytes, choristers, youth group, children's church, and just

plain fun) to grow the next generation of parishioners. We currently have several multi-generational families at the Church. Christ Church is a gospel-centered, inclusive and vibrant parish. Each person comes to us and is received as a special gift from God. We embrace everyone with grace and hospitality. Our success doing God's will in this complex world begins with how we nurture one another. We must shepherd our children, meet the needs of our adult members and engage with our surrounding community. To achieve this, we emphasize these activities:

For Our Children

- Sunday School classes
- Children's Church
- Youth Group and summer Mission Trips

For Adults

- Adult Christian Formation Series
- Studies in Christian Faith
- Faithful Professionals

For Our Community

- Community Ministries of Rockville
- English Conversational Club
- Bargain Box
- Serving Others Sundays
- Manna Food Center

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

Our foundation for stewardship is based on the teaching of tithing, understanding that all that we have is from God. We are also mindful of the importance of tithing to the diocese. Although most of our members do not tithe, we have received substantial pledges and donations over the years that have allowed us to sponsor and support many ministries. Currently, however, we have a budget shortfall that persists despite repeated and creative appeals to the congregation. This shortfall necessitated cuts, including funding for paid choir singers, portions of the youth program, and certain outreach commitments. We also found it necessary to reduce our

diocesan pledge. As our community works towards returning to a more sustainable budget, we have noted some key factors that likely had an impact on this year's budget. These include the combined church/school capital campaign, the loss (through deaths and departures) of some traditionally large pledges, and the Rector's retirement.

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

When Fr. McDuffie arrived as Rector 19 years ago, he and the congregation faced tremendous factional strife, occasioned in part by the controversial departure of his predecessor. Over a period of 5 years, our Rector was able through his patient counsel to guide the once very-divided Vestry and congregation toward a more unified and selfless perspective and practices. The love and acceptance Fr. McDuffie modeled through his leadership has enabled us to communicate effectively, resolve conflict, and work collaboratively. Apart from the budget shortfall noted above, conflict has been very minimal for many years.

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?

Over the past 10 years, we've experienced many changes, most of which have gone well. We warmly welcomed a new Assistant Rector, Cindy Simpson; embraced the Korean Congregation as its temporary home for approximately seven years; peacefully went through several Vestry elections; integrated a focus on caring for creation into both our culture and liturgy; worked through a transition to an all-volunteer choir; and celebrated (nervously but also joyously) the retirement of our long-time and beloved Rector. Through all these changes, we have had very good leadership, both clergy and lay.

We are currently experiencing changing demographics within our parish, shifting to a higher percentage of young families with children. Embracing and recognizing young families as the future of the church, we continue to seek ways to accommodate their time constraints and encourage their

involvement in volunteer activities, while trying to maintain a workable structure for our individual ministries.

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

- Preaching excellence
- Pastoral care
- Inspirational vision
- Pragmatic manager