

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, ORLANDO, FL

OFFICE OF TRANSITION MINISTRY COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO NARRATIVE
QUESTIONS RESPONSES – MARCH 2017

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

In 2016, we were blessed to celebrate our 120th Anniversary as a worshipping community in the city of Orlando. Our theme for our Anniversary Celebration was "Honoring our Foundation ~ Planting Seeds for the Future." In honor of our celebration, we held several special events that stretched from January to June. Our celebration included: a *Choir Fest* – where choirs and performers from different churches in the surrounding community joined our choir for a special Sunday afternoon concert; a *Love Fest* – where parishioners went door to door at a nearby Habitat for Humanity housing community spreading information about our church and its ministries; a *Formal Celebratory Luncheon* – where we honored 30 parishioners who have served as members of our congregation for over 50 years; a *Celebratory Mass of Celebration* – where our Bishop presided and administered the rite of Confirmation; *Family Day* – where we provided free ear & dental screenings and free books to neighborhood children, and also provided social resource information to adults; *Youth Sunday* – where we honored the academic achievements of all our youth; and, finally, *Taste of Islands* – an afternoon of great food, fun and dancing in honor of Caribbean Heritage Month. These events would not have been possible without the work of many parishioners who devoted much time and effort in making these events a success.

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

At the present time, we offer two Sunday morning services and one noonday prayer service on Wednesdays. Our first Sunday morning service is held at 7:30 AM. This service can be described as "low mass," as it is a said service without music or choir. It is led by the Priest, Eucharistic Minister, Ushers, Intercessor and Lectors. Our second Sunday Morning service is held at 10:00 AM. This service can be described as a traditional "sung mass," and is led by the Priest, Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, Intercessor, Verger (special occasions), Acolytes, Choir and Ushers. Also, we are accustomed to using incense each Sunday during the 10:00 AM Eucharist. Additionally, when fifth Sundays and other special occasions (Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc.) occur, we hold a joint Sunday service at 9:00 AM. Our Choir consists of fifteen faithful parishioners who serve each Sunday, except during the months of July and August. Our Choir is accompanied by our very gifted organist and pianist Carolyn Morris, and serves under the direction of our long-tenured Director of Music Ernest Boyd. The music provided for the 10:00 Eucharist usually comes from *The Hymnal 1982* and the *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*.

How do you practice incorporating others into ministry?

We are pleased to have over 15 different ministries and organizations within our Parish that allow our parishioners to share their varying talents. For example, those interested in service have the opportunity to participate in our chapter of the Daughters of the King, Episcopal Church Women, and Men's Club. Additionally, parishioners are always invited to assist in supporting our Sunday School, Food Pantry, King's Kids ministry and Teen Bible Study. For those interested in worship, our members have the ability serve to as Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, Choir members, Ushers, Intercessors, Altar Guild members, and on our Worship Committee. Lastly, those interested in the administrative practices of the church, have the opportunity to serve on the Vestry, Finance Committee, and Buildings & Grounds Committee.

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

To ensure continuity in Christian education during this transition, we presently hold a weekly Bible Study at Noon on Tuesdays. Also, a parishioner has recently taken on the responsibility of conducting a 5-week Lenten Bible Study on Sunday mornings in between services. This study is the result of one of ECW's strategic goals - to increase spiritual development. Additionally, we have a devoted deacon, who along with our Eucharistic visitors, provides visitations to our homebound parishioners. Also, our Daughters of the King meet weekly to pray for the needs of our congregation, community and the world. In an effort to maintain a sense of togetherness, our Episcopal Church Women host quarterly Family Fun Nights where we enjoy great food and games. We also provide a "coffee hour" following each Sunday service as an effort to maintain fellowship among our parishioners. Lastly, our Men's Club sponsor quarterly Fish Fry Fundraisers, and host an annual Music Extravaganza for the church and the community.

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

We are blessed to have a number of ministries that seek to respond to the needs of our surrounding neighborhood. Our Food Pantry feeds the hungry each Wednesday. Also, during Thanksgiving and Christmas season, we provide baskets with turkeys and all of the traditional fixings, to families that we serve. Our chapter of the Daughters of the King established a partnership with Washington Shores Elementary School, which is a few steps away from our building, in 2003. With the support of our congregation, the Daughters of the King are able to provide the school with supplies and free books each year. Over 4,000 books have been provided to students as a result of this partnership. On three nights of the week, we act as a host site for a local Narcotics Anonymous group. We have had this partnership with the N/A group for over 20 years. For the last seven years our church has been a meeting place and provided volunteers for the King's Kids and Super Kids programs. These programs facilitated by Minnie Hutchinson, a member of The Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Orlando, provide Christian education to children who reside in the Murchison Terrace Housing Community. Lastly, once children who participate in King's Kids reach middle school, they are invited to join our Teen

Bible Study, which meets every Friday after the end of school. The Bible Study, which is facilitated by our deacon, Patricia Roberts, and three dedicated parishioners, provides much needed encouragement and life-skills to all youth who participate.

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

During the season of Lent, we presently hold weekly Stations of the Cross services on Wednesday evening where we invite ministers from other denominations to join us (with members of their congregations) and provide homilies. This is also a practice that the ECW observes when requesting speakers for their annual Women's Day program. Our Parish Secretary hosts an annual Administrative Assistant's Day luncheon, where assistants from churches throughout the Orlando area are invited to come and be served by our parishioners. We also have parishioners who have answered the call to serve our Diocese and the larger church. The entire Executive Board of the Central Florida Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians consists of our parishioners, and our parishioners make up the majority of Chapter's list of members. Parishioner Dr. Karen Clark, who serves as our ECW President, was recently elected to serve as the Central Deanery Director for our Diocese. Parishioner Dr. Lorraine Harris serves on both the Commission on Ministry and the Diocesan Board. Parishioner Ms. Krisita Jackson, our DOK Chapter President, serves as the National Membership Chair of The Order of the Daughters of the King. Ms. Jackson was also recently elected for the second time to serve as a lay delegate for the General Convention. Lastly, we have two parishioners who serve on the Diocesan Anti-Racism Committee.

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

In the summer of 2014, we were very pleased to be given the opportunity to partner with Hilton Hotels of Central Florida and the Orlando Chapter of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, by presenting a Hospitality Institute and Job Readiness Training Program to the community. For four days our building was transformed into a training school for unemployed members of the community seeking employment with Hilton Hotels. This was a very successful endeavor and resulted in a number of the participants receiving job offers. A large number of our parishioners rolled up their sleeves to make this event a success, and it stands as one of the highlights of our parish's history. Sylvia McElroy, our Food Pantry chair, who took a large role in facilitating this event, may be contacted regarding this.

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

Preparing ourselves for the Church of the Future will be one of our primary shared goals with a new Rector. Due to the demographics of our congregation, this is an area that we find ourselves having the largest challenge with. However, as a result of our self-study congregational meeting, it is very evident that we are a congregation with a strong desire to embrace changes

that are necessary to secure our relevance as a worshipping community. The following areas have been identified as key areas of improvement that must be addressed as we move forward: 1) maintaining present social outreach ministries and building additional ones; 2) encouraging and embracing the diversity of our parishioners; 3) expanding Christian education and programs for youth and young adults; and 4) providing worship experiences that “feed” the needs of the younger generation.

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

Our Stewardship Committee holds an annual stewardship drive each year. At that time, each member of the congregation is asked to consider their blessings and to make a commitment of time, talent and treasure to the church. Additionally, the Worship Committee hosts a Ministry Fair each year where all parishioners are encouraged to join a new ministry. Our Parish Survey revealed that the overwhelming majority of parishioners are involved in at least one ministry in the church.

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

We are blessed to have a congregation that is comprised of individuals with different cultural backgrounds and life experiences. Because of this, differences of opinion do arise from time to time. However, in the last year, our congregation has made an increased effort to invoke a spirit of togetherness within the congregation. Our recent Taste of Islands event and Family Fun Nights have helped to achieve this goal. Additionally, we have held two congregational meetings and an open forum at our Annual Parish Meeting to allow parishioners the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. Additionally, in the last six years we have experienced the departure of two Rectors who served fairly short tenures. Both departures resulted in hurt feelings and uncertainty amongst our congregation. However, following periods of healing and restoration in both instances, we find that our resilience and tenacity as a congregation has shined.

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?

As a congregation, it can probably be said that we welcome and embrace meaningful change, and that we also fear and resist change. Nonetheless, we recognize that change is necessary in order to effectuate growth. During the tenure of our last Rector, there were some changes made to certain liturgical practices that were contrary to current standard liturgical practices in the Episcopal Church, particularly in the administration of baptism and the celebration of the Eucharist. These changes caused discontent among a number of parishioners. This was largely due to the presentation and communication of such changes. About two years ago, the Vestry voted to allow the Narcotics Anonymous Group to meet for a third evening on Fridays. This

change has provided some challenges in regards to scheduling and storage. However, rather than take the drastic step of eliminating the Friday night sessions, the Vestry has decided to continue working with the N/A Group by constructing an amended agreement. On the other hand, a positive change has been the reinstatement of our Greeter's ministry. This has been a positive change, as it provides newcomers with a positive first impression and instant friendliness the moment they enter our doors.

Please provide 4-6 words (separated by commas) describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community?

Dynamic Preaching, Teaching, Youth Leader, Administrative Leader, Pastoral Care, Christian Education