

All Saints in Transition

Responses to Narrative Questions as part of All Saints Minister Discernment

Describe a moment ---

Looking back on the last two years we are amazed at how quickly and how successfully we pivoted from in-person worship with Communion to Zoom services without Communion in March of 2020. The realization that our church is a community of people, with or without our beloved building to gather in, with or without Communion, was very powerful for us all.

The final service sending forth our rector of 12 years was held on January 9, 2022, in the church. But because of the Omicron variant many of us made the decision to participate in that service online, so as not to pack the church, which would have made social distancing impossible. We all entered the service with joy at seeing each other safely, and were able to receive the rector's final sermon, understanding that this church is a special, holy place, made up of people who give one another support. We are Communion to each other even when we cannot be physically together to receive Communion.

How are you preparing ---

While we believe that some of the basics of ritual and familiar practices will be maintained, perhaps the only way to be ready for the church of the future is to live with uncertainty, embracing core beliefs no matter what happens. Recent reports from the greater church and the Diocese of Vermont about the long-term survival of many congregations are not encouraging. Simply increasing revenue and increasing membership are not answers in and of themselves. We are learning to take on and delegate tasks and ministries without relying so heavily on clergy. More importantly, the pandemic has helped us discover our adaptability, our capacity to

change and our commitment to not getting locked into doing things a certain way without asking why.

Please provide words ---

Joyful, hospitable, collaborative, grounded in the ways of Jesus

Describe your liturgical style ---

Our liturgy is a mix of the formal and the informal, using the Book of Common Prayer 1979 as a guide. We value lay participation in our services, which include folk music about once a month. Our Sunday school seeks to form our children and young people in the church seasons, in prayer and faithfulness so as to love God in the world, and in understanding that all that we do in church and outside of church is worship.

How do you practice ---

We have widespread participation in ministries that include music, formation, worship, pastoral care, finances, technical support and others. While we have the traditional sign-up sheets for many ministries and events, we make a point of inviting people directly and personally to participate in these ministries. Among our regular offerings are "Invite a Friend to Church School" days as a way for newcomers to sample this ministry without being overwhelmed.

As a worshipping community ---

We are deeply conscious that when we offer prayers for others with needs our awareness of those needs grows, and we understand that by listening to these prayers we can learn how we can be supportive. We offer meals and cards for people who experience losses like a family death. We have an active and experienced Pastoral Care Team, co-led by our Deacon and a lay member. This

team was founded 14 years ago and meets every four to six weeks to review the needs of the parish for various kinds of care. We hold weekly services, bible studies and prayer groups. We value the coffee hours, special events and other forms of fellowship that have been on hold since the onset of the pandemic. In the meantime we have looked for ways to enjoy one another's company online.

How do you engage ---

The labyrinth on our church grounds invites members of the surrounding community to explore their spiritual lives. We support the ministries of our members who work in the health care and education professions. We make our building available as a safe space to meet for outside groups such as AA, Al-Anon and a local men's group.

Describe your worshipping ---

We support the South Burlington Food Shelf, the Angel Tree project for distributing Christmas gifts, JUMP (the Joint Urban Ministry Project), the local CROP walk, United Thank Offering and Episcopal Relief and Development. We contribute annually to four local charities that focus on the wellness needs of people, drawing on funds raised from our annual bazaar. Several members of All Saints participate regularly in the online Green Mountain Abbey services initiated by Bishop Shannon MacVean-Brown. Some members have been active in supporting refugee resettlement in the Burlington area.

Tell about a ministry ---

Our adult forum as it presently operates is a new program: the leader uses videos prepared by biblical scholars and church leaders to offer a thematic understanding of our faith that deepens our faith and invites us to put it into action. (Contact: Joshua Cheney 802-343-7425 or jcheney802@yahoo.com). New initiatives also include support for the recently created South Burlington Food Shelf (contact: Larry Baxter 802-862-1213 or revlisette@aol.com) and offering plots in the Community

Garden on our grounds to area residents (contacts: Susan Hartman 802-660-4444 or soarlikeaneagle33@gmail.com and Emily Holt 603-393-2421.)

What is your practice of stewardship ---

Our annual campaign to support our budgeted ministry runs from November through December. It is initiated by a letter from the Senior Warden, followed by a series of written or in-person testimonials by parishioners on the theme of "What All Saints Means to Me." These testimonials are not money "asks"; rather, they speak of the importance of our worshipping community in each person's life. We understand that ministry costs money, but we strive for a greater understanding of stewardship as valuing and sustaining the gift of community, of the body of Christ.

What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? ---

It has been more than a decade since we have had a significant conflict in our church. But we understand how important it is to listen respectfully and work through differences.

What is your experience leading/addressing change ---

We value the need for perseverance, and understand that a foundation in the knowledge and love of the teachings of Jesus is necessary to be present to the new reality that fewer people are coming to church. There may be a positive outcome in offering our experience of living in community and following the model of Jesus as an opportunity to make a difference in the world. When we bring people together, seek the counsel of others, make plans for the future, understand the impact of change and communicate why change is needed we give others the time to hear us and move toward us if they wish.

