

St John's Community Portfolio

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

In the recent past St. John's was able to raise \$4,500 for Haiti earthquake relief and has started a Sunday school, but a moment which stands out as one of success and fulfillment would be Bethlehem Home in Kenya. Five years ago the project was started to help the orphans and elders survive a crisis situation of famine and drought. In the past five years the project has grown to monthly financial support for food and sustenance; yearly financial support for higher education (medical school, pharmacy school) and various trade schools. It has been reported that since we have started supporting their food needs, no one has died of starvation at Bethlehem Home.

2. Describe your liturgical style and practice. If you have more than one, describe them all.

St. John's normally uses Rite II from the Prayer book for our 10:30 a.m. Sunday service. The last Sunday of each month, the service incorporates healing prayers for specific people or for those who want to come forward for the laying-on-of-hands.

Our choir, though small, is faithful and consistent in leading our singing, using both traditional and contemporary music. A guitarist and a flutist often accompany the organist.

In addition to the traditional observation of Advent, St. Nicholas visits our congregation and talks to the children. Christmas is a lovely season at St. John's with greenery decorating the church and a crèche at the front of the nave.

Our Holy Week activities include Monday-Wednesday meditation services, Maundy Thursday foot washing and stripping of the altar, an all night Deacon's Beacon outside the church, Good Friday services, and the Great Easter Vigil. Easter day begins with a sunrise service on Log Hill, followed by Easter service at the church, an Easter egg hunt and a brunch for the congregation after church.

Children are incorporated into the Sunday service by having them light and extinguish the altar candles and by having children assist in bringing up the offerings. The priest frequently has the children come forward during the Sunday service to discuss what they learned in Sunday school.

St. John's is fortunate to have a deacon in residence who reads the Gospel lesson, prepares the Table, occasionally preaches, dismisses the congregation, and tends the Deacon's Beacon on Maundy Thursday.

3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Open invitations are offered in the Priest's bi-weekly email newsletter to serve in various ministries and during the announcements at each Sunday service. Parishioners of St. John's act as chalice bearers, bring Eucharistic elements to the altar, Eucharistic visitors, ushers, readers of the Bible lessons and prayers of the people, and presenters of special music. Members of the congregation also serve on the Altar Guild, produce the worship leaflet, teach Sunday school, take turns with the refreshments served after church, assist with church and rectory maintenance, and perform numerous other services.

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

In connection with the resignation of a previous priest, St. John's found itself divided and searching for spiritual, physical and emotional healing. In the six years since, under the leadership of Rev. Jo Ann Ford, St John's has accomplished a healing of the loss and a coming together with unity. The Church has created an atmosphere of caring, understanding and sharing with one another.

St. John's has a long tradition of offering Eucharist at each Sunday service.

We have initiated a healing service once each month that is a powerful experience for the whole congregation. In addition to the prayer list, which is revised weekly in the bulletin, the congregation also has the opportunity to request prayers for specific individuals, which are included in the Prayers of the People.

The Rector's bi-weekly emails provide information about upcoming activities, as well as making sure that everyone is aware of any members in distress who need prayer or personal contact.

Adult forums provide opportunity for parishioners to explore their faith in a nurturing environment.

Informal gatherings are very positive experiences that help to bind the congregation together. Cottage meetings held over the last several years have helped members of the congregation get to know each other better as well as engage in meaningful discussion of the church. The congregation meets for coffee after each service and we have pot luck luncheons several times per year.

All of these activities have created an atmosphere of caring and sharing.

5. Describe your community's involvement in the wider Church and/or region?

Several ministries support the wider Church, including:

- Through our Deacon, Bob Larson, the church is actively engaged in the Kairos Prison Ministry at the State Correctional Facility in Delta. Those not able to attend the closing ceremony have provided hundreds of cookies for the weekend meetings at the Prison

- The church has been involved in supporting Bethlehem House Orphanage in Kenya. This has included significant funds for daily sustenance, as well as scholarships for students to attend trade school, medical school and pharmacy school. The church has also sponsored visits to the orphanage to monitor the results of our efforts and to provide assistance.
- The church raised \$4,500 for the Episcopal Relief and Development Agency to be used for earthquake relief in Haiti.

On a local basis:

- The church supports the Ouray County Food Bank with funding, contributions of food and manpower for the Food Bank.
- Senior Luncheons sponsored by Neighbor-to-Neighbor take place at St. John's several times a year and St. John's members frequently provide programs. Church members also participate in other programs of Neighbor-to-Neighbor.
- This year a group of Ouray County Churches, including St. John's, have inaugurated a Compassion Weekend in which volunteers will perform minor repairs, painting and other odd jobs for the community.
- St. John's has a School Volunteer Coordinator who places congregation members in one-on-one tutoring in classrooms at Ouray School.
- St. John's has had a team in the Mt. Sneffels Educational Foundation spelling bee and trivia bowl fundraisers.
- For the past two years our Rector has participated in, and planned, community church services in the Ouray Park during the summer.
- The congregation makes prayer shawls that are given to people in the greater church community who have experienced serious emotional or physical trauma.
- The Rector, Deacon and Vestry members have participated in CDI Training, the Uncompahgre Valley Deaconate Ministry, and Cursillo educational activities.

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

- Members of the St. John's congregation design and knit prayer shawls which are then blessed and presented, as a source of comfort, to persons both in and outside our community who have a special need due to grief, loss, hardship or any other of life's adversities.
- The Sunday worship bulletin, lists the names of individuals or families who are in need of prayer for whatever reason, be they from St. John's, Ouray, Ouray County, the United States or wherever without regard to religious or denominational preference. Parishioners also have the opportunity request prayers at the Sunday service for those in need.
- Several times each year, St. John's hosts an ecumenical Senior Luncheon on a Wednesday to provide a social gathering opportunity for the elderly persons in the community.
- Members of St. John's individually participate in activities of pastoral care beyond the St. John's worshipping community with their voluntary involvement in Neighbor

- to Neighbor, Ouray County Food Bank, Haiti earthquake relief, Kenya Bethlehem Home, Kairos Prison Ministry, Cursillo, Hospice of the Western Slope, and Noonday Prayer at area nursing homes.

7. Tell about a ministry you have initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted for more information about this ministry?

St. John's has not had a large number of families with Sunday school age children in attendance. However, within the past year we have had six to eight children attending church, making it possible to form the first Sunday school at St. John's in a number of years. Lead by Sue Hillhouse, a former school teacher, a Sunday school was formed in 2010 with five parishioners obtaining the required training and developing lesson plans to coincide with the Church calendar. Rotating teachers throughout the month, the children have been exposed to structured lessons centered on the Bible and the Christian faith. The teaching group has exhibited creativity in the materials and methods used during the lessons and for supporting activities. As they join the rest of the congregation following announcements during the service, the children often tell the congregation what they have done and learned that day. Detailed Sunday school information can be obtained by contacting Sue Hillhouse at 970-626-2970.

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

Several factors contribute to the demographics of St. John's, which are different in many ways from a more "traditional" Episcopal parish. A number of our parishioners are in Ouray part time and live elsewhere during the winter months. St. John's has a considerable number of members who have moved to the community to spend their retirement years.

The Vestry and congregation of St. John's are discussing and thinking about how a small Episcopal Church in Ouray, Colorado, can develop and prepare itself for the Church of the future and how it can be more relevant in the future. The traditional side of St. John's satisfies a significant proportion of our congregation. We continually concern ourselves with ways to attract those who reject "organized religion," have not yet found their church home, or would like to deepen their faith.

Approximately three years ago, St. John's developed a new Mission Statement:

"As a congregation, our mission is to love Jesus Christ and care for one another as we seek to bear witness to God's unconditional Love. We strive to serve our members and the larger community through the sharing of our resources and gifts. As an inclusive church, we welcome all who wish to share our rich Episcopal traditions and vision for the future."

St. John's and its members live into the Mission Statement in a number of ways, including very active leadership or participation in numerous ministries. We believe there is much more than can be done to prepare St. John's to be a part of the Church of the future. Discussions by the Vestry and the congregation during Cottage Meetings have recently explored:

- Flexibility in times of church services
- Expanded social gatherings for the members and the community

- Shared services and activities with other area Episcopal churches and those of other denominations
- St. John's is developing a Community Prayer Garden at the church
- Successfully supported the development of an Uncompahgre Valley Deaconate with the ordination of The Rev. Bob Larson, who serves St. John's and Episcopal churches in Montrose and Delta

We also have recognized that there also is an opportunity to develop ways to reach out to members of the local Hispanic community.

In addition to the traditional, the Vestry, in particular, has initiated discussions of how we might capitalize on technology such as our web site, Skype, Facebook, YouTube and other social networking.

The Vestry and members of St. John's will welcome leadership, innovation, knowledge and inspiration in all of these areas as we build on the past and enter a new phase for our church when we are joined by a new Rector.

Connections

Church web site : www.stjohnsouray.com

Media Links: Not yet available.

References

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