

The Church of The Holy Trinity

2018 - Clergy Transition Portfolio Responses

Prepared by: The Transition Team - Marie Burlette, Steven Horst, Jean Maynard,
Andrew Milliken, Hector Pinero, Diane Reid, Eric Rennie, Stacey Rich



Jean Maynard 2018

The Church Of The Holy Trinity
381 Main Street, Middletown, Connecticut

Forward

Dear Parish Members,

First, your Transition Team would like to give you all another big thank you for being so engaged during the discernment phase of our clergy transition process. Without your input we would not have been able to develop the information contained in our portfolio. The document includes the answers that were developed during the process and submitted in April 2018.

The Transition Team would like you to know that we worked hard to thoughtfully and prayerfully bring together all the information we had to provide “one voice” for the parish. As part of the process, we had to make some difficult decisions on what to focus in our responses.

Hopefully, you will all feel that this document does provide a common voice for the parish, even if the responses are not exactly how you would have written them. Please rest assured that we did review and consider every one of the responses we received from you in the process.

Lastly, we all felt your prayers during this crucial first phase of the clergy transition process. We know that they were instrumental in doing just what we, collectively, were asking God to help us do: “to listen to your Holy Spirit and to carry out our work in a spirit of love and wisdom. Raise up for us a rector who is a person after your own heart, and who has the gifts and the inspiration to lead us in the next stage of our parish life.”

Sincerely,

The Transition Team

Portfolio Responses

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

As a part of the Body of Christ, we seek to provide for the well-being of those who are less fortunate, both materially and spiritually.

Every Christmas Eve, the space in front of the altar overflows with warm socks, hats, and gloves for those who are homeless and those in need in the local community. These are given to those who stay overnight in our Chapel warming center. Parishioners also

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provide gifts for local children through our Salvation Army Giving Tree.

We host a Homeless Memorial Service each year at the Winter Solstice – The Longest Night. This service honors those who lost their lives while homeless in our county. Candles are lit for each person who is no longer with us and others light candles for those they have known and who have died while homeless. Hymns are sung, and prayers offered up for the ending of homelessness.

2. Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.

We have a flexible worship style. Typically, our worship includes Holy Eucharist Rite II on Thursdays at Noon and Sundays at 8am (contemplative with music) and 10:15am (with music: choir, choir and organ or Praise Band). Thursday Eucharist in the Chapel is a relaxed and intimate service which includes group Bible reflection. One Sunday each month at 10:15 is a youth/family-oriented service with the Praise Band, contemporary Christian music, and youth participation in other aspects of the service. On Christmas Eve there is a family service with pageant and a late evening service with special music. Holy Week services include Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil as well as other liturgies such as Stations of the Cross. With the Holy Spirit to guide us, we offer services geared towards the community, including a service with lunch for homebound parishioners and participation in an interfaith Blessing of Animals. Our Annual Picnic includes celebrating Eucharist in the park. In July and August, we worship with Trinity Church in Portland, alternating locations each month, and celebrating a “Mass on the Grass” with our Praise Band at Portland for the Labor Day weekend.

3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

We offer many opportunities to participate in a variety of ministries supporting our parish life and our downtown community. Many of our ministries began at the initiative of parishioners who felt a particular calling. When a need is identified for ministry, intentional thought is given to the interests/talents of individuals and a personal invitation is extended by church leaders. Opportunities to serve are announced during services and in bulletins. Our eNews, newsletter, and Facebook page reach those not regularly in attendance. Parishioners of all ages are called to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist. Our choir, praise band and adult bell choir are open to teens and adults. Children ages 8+ are invited to join the junior bell choir. A cross-section of our membership is represented on the vestry, building and grounds, music/liturgy, outreach and finance committees. Others lead through participation in our youth and Sunday school programs. All are welcome to join prayer and bible study groups, the House of Talents and the ECW. Our children, youth, their parents and retirees serve together in different functions as members of the Body of Christ. (Rom 12:4-5).

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

In addition to the pastoral role of the Rector, we have been blessed with a deacon who

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has been very active in home, hospital, and nursing home visitation, as well as a Benedictine monk and several members who serve as Eucharistic Visitors. At both Sunday services, a Prayer and Healing Team provides prayer and laying on of hands after the Eucharist. One retired priest who is a member of the parish, and another who lives in Middletown offer spiritual direction. Our House of Talents, a group of senior women, has met for half a century for fellowship and to make crafts, and this and several other parish groups also function as fellowship groups. Our Caring Casseroles program provides meals for members who are ill or bereaved, and we offer prayer shawls made by parishioners for any who request them. An intercessory prayer group meets each Thursday to pray for the needs of members, the Church, and the world. An Adult Forum meets between Sunday services to study Scripture. This year's weekly Lenten Forum was on types of prayer, which has also been the topic of regular Quiet Days in Advent and Lent.

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

Our members have served as deputies to General Convention, Provincial Synod, as members of TEC and Diocesan Standing Committees and are well represented at Diocesan-wide events. CHT's Praise Band has performed statewide and our downtown location allows us to maintain a reliable presence at events like the Stroll on Main, Motorcycle Mania and Cruise Night. Our Outreach Committee allocates funds to worthy local, national and international groups. Our youth hold an annual tag sale to support causes of their choosing, most recently a mission trip. CHT has a long history of service to the soup kitchen, support to a local food pantry and our Clothing Closet. Our building is open to the community and is home to many 12-step groups. We work with local agencies and have furnished apartments to assist several members of our community, in addition to hosting a warming center during winter months. Along with other faith-based groups, we actively participate in the Middletown Refugee Resettlement Coalition, which has resettled 2 families. As we discern God's mission for our parish, we will continue to explore opportunities for collaboration with our partners in the community.

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

For a century, Holy Trinity has served as an "incubator parish," either starting or providing space for organizations that later branched out on their own, including the local soup kitchen, St. Luke's senior housing, a transportation service for the elderly, the local Head Start, and a drug rehabilitation agency. We are locally called "the People's Church" because of our ministries to those who are homeless: a winter overnight warming center, the Longest Night service remembering those who have died homeless, the Clothing Closet (recently adopted as a ministry of the church), and our planned shower/laundry facility. From our offices, two social workers provide free counseling and referral services for people who are homeless, unemployed, or have fallen upon hard times. We host 12-step groups most days of the week and are the main location for NA. Each month we conduct services at two local nursing homes, one a weekday Eucharist and the other a Sunday Morning Prayer service with music that is led by lay members.

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We also host an annual service and lunch at the church attended by residents of local nursing facilities who are brought by ambulance or van.

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

Early in 2013, parishioners decided to dedicate part of the church basement to serve people who are homeless.

We investigated programs available in Middletown to determine what needs are not being met. Carl Loges, a parishioner and social worker, reported to the vestry that, often, people who are homeless have many medical issues, generally have only one meal per day and include many veterans. Carl expressed his vision for a day site where they could get help. This eventually evolved into "Showers for the Homeless."

In February 2014, the Showers for the Homeless project began. The year was spent looking into and applying for grants. Cleaning up of the basement area continued and a committee comprised of parishioners and interested parties in the community has been formed. Plans have been developed by an architect. The focus will now shift toward fundraising for construction, which includes lead remediation.

[Carl Loges](#) can be contacted about the project. Vestry member Enid Healy has recently agreed to co-chair the program with Carl.

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

The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. How we do this is ever evolving as we listen to and try to discern what God is leading us toward. There are many ways to engage individuals and families so we offer diverse ways to engage parishioners through Sunday worship, prayer group, Bible study, Sunday School, lay ministries, and leadership roles. We also work outside our walls on the many outreach activities mentioned in our responses.

The true future of the Church is to stay faithful to these foundations and ministries while keeping our hearts and minds open to the voices of God and Jesus. We also pray for the strength and guidance to make changes needed to be true to this mission without forgetting our history.

A relatively new initiative for our church is strategically engaging with partners. We are working to foster strong relationships with neighboring churches through shared services during the summer and at some holidays. We have also been working with a multi-organizational refugee resettlement group. We are looking for ways to collaborate with nearby Wesleyan University in the future.

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

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In 2018, overall pledging increased in the face of declining attendance demonstrating that parishioners understand the meaning of stewardship and value the contribution the church makes to the community through various ministries. When asked directly, parishioners are extremely generous.

Stewardship is often described as tithing, and, when we think of stewardship, many associate the term with church budgets as well as discussions about increased church expenses. However, through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is much more than that.

Stewardship includes giving back to God through the use of our time, gifts, talents and treasures. Spiritual giving plays an important role as well. CHT provides spiritual stewardship through our Sunday school program, music, and community events. A portion of the budget provides donations locally and nationally, as well as internationally. The congregation is nurtured through many activities such as bible study, prayer group, peace offerings, First Tuesday and Sunday morning coffee hour. We practice stewardship of our building by making it available to local groups, and our spaces are filled most nights of the week.

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

In February 2017, we began an experiment with the time of our Sunday Service and Sunday School by going to a single service at 9am. Our goals were to create an improved Christian formation program nurturing both children and teachers as well as to create "critical mass" by gathering everyone into one service for worship as the Body of Christ. We used a series of Parish Forums and a survey for gathering feedback in addition to the attendance statistics. The Vestry and the Liturgy & Music Advisory Team considered all the data and concluded that our goals for Christian formation were not met and critical mass was elusive. Although many enjoyed the intergenerational offerings, that did not appear to offset the downsides. In September, we returned to two services on Sundays.

We enjoy being together more often than solely at our annual meetings. Intergenerational activities have a lot of support, but we learned that many members desire opportunities for quiet, contemplative worship. We will continue to explore ways to integrate our youth into the worship life of the parish and learn about our liturgical traditions.

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?

With any organization that has a diverse and engaged population, there are going to be times when not everyone agrees. Our answer to Question 10 covers an example of a change that went poorly.

The process of working through conflict as a community is important to us. Communication happens through announcements in bulletins, eNews, newsletter, and verbally during the service, coffee hour and regular conversation. We have also used

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parish forum meetings to engage in dialog on topics as a group. Even with effort in these areas, there are times that individuals feel like they have not been heard. With prayer, forgiveness, and dedication to having an open and inclusive conversation, we aim to minimize those situations.

A change that went well was our bookkeeping, which significantly increased the transparency of our finances. We hired a bookkeeper to help us change to fund accounting and standardize our financial reports, in part by moving all of the individual accounts into our operating account. This increased our efficiency by allowing us to enter income, expenses, etc. into one place and improved reporting to the vestry and parish with monthly reports that are clear and detailed.

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

- Teaches Jesus Christ's message through articulate sermons and involvement in Christian Education.
- Listens to, engages and empowers parishioners to embrace God's future
- Inspires and encourages the Body of Christ to attend to God's mission with enthusiasm and compassion
- Cares for the parishioners and community

Strengths

- Multifaceted Music Program including a Praise Band.
- Financial Willingness: The parish has stepped up financially when there was a clear need and call.
- Deep roots in a downtown historic building with a long history of service to the community.
- Strong lay leadership.
- Diversity: Holy Trinity's membership has a great deal of diversity in race, age, education, economic situation, theological and liturgical orientation.

Challenges

- Working together to develop and institute new leadership models given our change in status from a full-time to half-time rector.
- Building: Balancing the important and extensive use of our building with the effort and cost to maintain it while imagining new and enhanced uses of our beloved church.

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- Attendance and Membership: We are continually discerning how to fully participate in God's mission in the face of declining membership.
- Parish Community and Parishioner Engagement: Working together to robustly develop and nurture our parish community to its fullest potential.