

ST. MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A parish of the Diocese of North Carolina

MINISTRY PORTFOLIO St. Mary's Rector Search Committee April, 2021

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

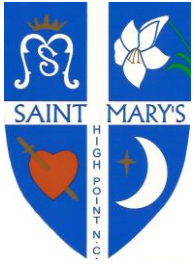
The mission of St. Mary's is "Inspiring in worship; Loving without exception; Giving in all that we do."

We do this as members of our city's life. During the pandemic, Open Door Ministry Homeless Shelter required housing for 20 men. In response, our parish offered our CLC building as a shelter from April to August of 2020. The parish covered associated cleaning costs and provided entertainment for our guests. Volunteers also provided meals each weekend. St. Mary's utilized its many resources to provide a safe home for vulnerable members of our community.

We also care for the people and ministries within our parish. The retirement of Dr. Harold Andrews, after 56 years as our organist and choir director, presented an opportunity to care for a member of our church leadership AND create a bright future for our music program which is central to our worship. Our rector oversaw Harold's financial transition into a safe retirement and choir members drove Dr. Andrews to medical appointments and visited him regularly. At the same time our vestry ensured the continuation of our music programs, expanding the choral singers and hiring Dr. Charles Hogan to shepherd our music ministry.

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

We offer three distinct services each Sunday, as well as a midweek service. The eight a.m. service is a silent service with no accompanying music. Eucharist follows Rite II. An informal service is offered at 9:00 a.m. and follows Enriching Our Worship. A praise band provides the music and a play area is made available for young children. The 11 am service is a Rite II Eucharist with a full choir led by our organist/choir master. We also offer a midweek Eucharist. The liturgy alternates weekly between Rite I and Rite II. The organist provides music on occasion. The daily office is lay-led and is prayed Monday through Friday. In addition, Eucharist is celebrated on each feast day.



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How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

St. Mary's offers an array of opportunities to incorporate and encourage others to engage in parish ministry. Parishioners serve as chalice bearers, lay readers, leaders for the Daily Office, the choristers and altar guild members. Our youth are encouraged to serve as acolytes, and the subdeacon ministry trains high school seniors to serve at the altar.

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

We care for our spiritual, emotional and physical well-being by providing groups and activities that care for the parish, as well as the High Point community. Weekly Bible studies and education forums are offered for all ages. The Daughters of the King pray for all who request prayers. Eucharistic Visitors visit those unable to attend regular services. A healing service is offered weekly and a contemplative Taize is offered monthly. Stephen Ministers care for those experiencing emotional difficulties. The Helping Hands Committee oversees plans and preparations for food and support for parishioners in need, such as parents with a newborn, those experiencing the loss of a family member, or requiring rides due to lifestyle challenges. The Center for Prayer and Spirituality has been established to introduce contemplative practices that enrich and deepen the daily spiritual life. Introduction to Centering Prayer, Christian icon writing, Writing as a Spiritual Practice, and Walking the Labyrinth during Advent and Lent have been offered to St. Mary's and the wider community.

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

The people of St. Mary's give their time and money for our community, our diocese, and the broader world. We work locally with and fund programming for Habitat for Humanity; local shelters serving those experiencing homelessness and vulnerability; organizations which address food insecurity such as Simple Gestures and Mobile Meals; our neighborhood YWCA and Diaper Bank; the High Point Jail Ministry; and the High Point Community Clinic, which is a medical clinic for the uninsured, indigent, and undocumented.

Parish members serve on diocesan committees and have led the state ECW. Youth from St. Mary's have served on the CCY board as well as the search committees for both our bishop and suffragan bishop. St. Mary's also is committed to always giving our full diocesan ask.



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Beyond serving our city and region, we fund scholarships for students in Africa. In addition, our youth have participated in mission trips in eastern NC, Washington DC, and Texas.

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

Community outreach is central to the identity of St. Mary's. Our parish embraces Christ's message of love and recognizes that our stewardship calls us to assist in the community whenever the need arises. We have a long history of providing our resources, financial as well as people, to support organizations in the community that actively work to address needs. We have provided financial assistance to our Youth Choirs, Thompson Home & Family Focus, Interfaith Hospitality Network, and other worthy organizations. St. Mary's is involved in feeding those in need through Simple Gestures, Mobile Meals, Open Door Ministries, West End Ministries, Leslie's House, and Bountiful Harvest. Our members also participate in service projects outside of our church including an annual youth mission trip, projects with Habitat for Humanity, and other community volunteer groups. We care for our community through Home Buddies, Helping Hands, Stephen Ministry, Prison Ministry, AA, and in several ways at Fairview Elementary, a local Title 1 school. In 2006, we decided to reach out further with our ministry and adopted 3 youths from the church sponsored orphanage in Uganda.

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

Through a parish-wide visioning process, St. Marians were called to found The Friendship Table (TFT), an intentional community in the mold of the New Monasticism. As High Point suffers from food insecurity (it has consistently been ranked one of the top ten food deserts nationwide), we decided that TFT's mission would be to address this problem. Prior to the pandemic, the intention was to invite people in their early twenties to live in community together and establish a rule of life. They would eat together, pray and worship together, and serve the community together. While the pandemic has made it impossible for the members to live in community, they do pray and attend religious formation classes together and work closely with local outreach programs such as Growing High Point who share our mission to alleviate the suffering caused by food insecurity. Though the church has been closed, the members have been attending services virtually as well as praying together via Zoom.

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

In 2017, St. Mary's completed a \$10,000,000 campus expansion project with no acquired debt. A Visioning Committee was formed and tasked with answering one question: having completed



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a project of this scope successfully, what should St. Mary's do next? Working through a series of all-parish meetings, this group developed our vision for the future and defined our Purpose: Inspiring in Worship; Loving Without Exception; and Giving of Ourselves Completely. With our purpose as guidance, St. Mary's developed a strategic plan for the future:

1. Reinvigorate and expand outreach and mission to have transformative effects on our communities.
2. Ensure long-term success of our excellent worship program, specifically, setting strategies to be the best church around for our unique Anglican music tradition.
3. Create a strategic plan for communications and create opportunities for internal community building.
4. Grow and strengthen programs for youth and young people.

Our purpose and goals to achieve our vision will guide our work together for the foreseeable future.

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

Using the Gifts God has Given Us to Do the Work He is Calling Us to Do

Stewardship is a spiritual matter and is a part of Christian living. It takes place daily, not just annually during the Every Member Canvass. The people of St. Mary's understand that the resources/gifts in our possession are temporary gifts from God, that selflessly sharing these gifts as God desires is a transformative experience for both the giver and the receiver. Stewardship is about intentionally committing ourselves to His work in all areas of our lives. We choose to do this in grateful response to God and as a part of our covenant with Him.

Our parish depends on the generosity and talents of our members to maintain a rich and vibrant worship community. Parish members actively lead the daily offices and formation programs, maintain connections with the homebound, offer counselling services for the bereft, and lead parish efforts to eradicate hunger in the community. St. Marians also participate as leaders and volunteers in a variety of community initiatives to address hunger, homelessness, addiction, racial inequity, and protection of the environment.



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

During St. Mary's 2010 building project we encountered conflict with the selection of our building team. Conflict arose because longtime members whose firms bid to lead various aspects of construction were not selected. After a thorough and prayerful review of all submissions, our building committee chose those applicants they felt were best. Our building committee had analyzed all the needs of our project, especially the parish's commitment to "green" building, and selected those firms that best enabled us to accomplish our construction goals. This was not a time to show favoritism to parish members and St. Mary's member's firms were not chosen. Making conciliatory visits to those member firms, we explained our decisions and listened as they expressed their feelings.

St. Mary's has sometimes been described as "conflict avoidant," but in this instance we tried to address the conflict head on, to treat it at its sources. Feelings were still hurt but we faced the challenge, not pretending that conflict was not present. In a close knit parish our church family feelings are often hurt, but the balm of discussion and love can help if applied in quick and tender fashion.

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?

Church leadership understands the key to successful change is to properly prepare the community. While some transitions have gone better than others, our congregation's response to change is driven by the intent of the change, how the change is presented, and how the change aligns with our purpose. Major change is always discussed in detail with many opportunities for parishioners to provide feedback. Discernment is always part of the process and parishioners are given ample opportunity to listen for God's guidance as the church prepares to move in new directions. In the past 10 years, St. Mary's has implemented the following:

- Recognized a desire for new styles of worship, introducing informal worship and other spiritual practices such as Taize and Centering Prayer while maintaining our traditional services.
- Embraced the universality of love and ministry, committing to supporting and performing same-sex marriages.
- Supported our changing mission through expansion of our campus with the addition of a Community Life Center and an addition to the main church.



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Each change has served to strengthen our parish, resulting in the resilient church community that we are today.

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

Pastoral Care: a person who understands the importance of a clergy-connection to all members of the congregation and extends compassion, empathy, and spiritual guidance.

Leadership: a strong communicator, mediator, and collaborative leader who will reforge connections within the parish community as we move forward post-Covid.

Visionary: a rector who leads the parish in discerning how to best use the abundant resources of St. Mary's to pursue God's work in our parish and in our community.

Homilist: an articulate, knowledgeable, and theologically-sound preacher who inspires spiritual growth by connecting God's Word to the personal experiences of parishioners.

Liturgist: a rector who values the varied liturgical traditions of the Episcopal Church yet is prepared to draw on alternative sources to create a variety of worship experiences.