



ST. MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A parish of the Diocese of North Carolina

It is the desire and responsibility of the Search Committee to gather information on the desires and concerns of the members and staff of St. Mary's. We look not only at where we have been as a parish, but where we are going. These insights give the Search Committee the tools to build a profile of the person desired and needed to guide St. Mary's.

Completing a Parish Survey is the starting point of gathering this information.

St. Mary's is a community of 508 active members and 21 active non-members. The process of completing a parish wide survey during COVID-19 was challenging. While we were unable to gather to discuss the topics in person, we reached out to all members by electronic survey, mailed hard copies of the survey, Zoom meeting focus groups and individual personal discussions.

ELECTRONIC SURVEY

344 emails sent
23 emails returned
70 surveys submitted
21.8% return rate

MAILED HARD COPIES OF SURVEY

125 surveys mailed
22 surveys submitted
17.6% return rate

ZOOM MEETINGS AND PERSONAL MEETINGS

8 Zoom Meetings Available
47 Attendees
10 Personal Meetings

Through these efforts we received feedback from 149 people out of the pool of 529 active members, active non-members, and staff. Our survey results are based on a 28% representation of our community.



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PASTORAL CARE

A pastor is a shepherd of the flock, providing care and guidance to the community. Responses to the survey stressed the critical importance of pastoral care in supporting members as they deal with crises of the spirit and body. St. Marians also recognize the pastoral role of the priest in guiding our spiritual journey as we grow in faith.

“My priest was the one that I went to in my biggest times of need. They have been genuine, non judgmental, open minded and forthcoming with strong advice and assistance.”

“When my father was near death I reached out to clergy for advice and perspective. His calm advice and sympathy made a huge difference in how I dealt with Dad's final hours and ultimate death. I will always be grateful.”

“Pastoral care is of utmost importance to me. Glenn Busch was instrumental in helping our family through several difficult times in our lives. His care for us was not just a visit or a pat on the hand, it was a long-term commitment to our spiritual health.”

“Help though challenging times in life, celebrate significant times in life (weddings, baptisms, funerals), being an example on how to walk through life with faith (vulnerable)”

“Being instrumental in guiding me through personal and family illness and crisis.”

“They have listened when I needed to process what was happening in my life. They have been available to talk with me as I made decisions and discerned the movings of the Spirit in my life.”

“Strengths in Pastoral care; the ability to attend to all age groups in the church from the youngest to the oldest.”

WANTED

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



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LEADERSHIP

A rector is charged by the bishop to be the leader of our parish. Leadership is a full-time responsibility which touches all aspects of our community life. A rector is a true shepherd, responsible to teach us the meaning and relevance of the Gospel, to advise us in times of spiritual need, and to facilitate relationships within the community.

“creative and responsive theologically curious - not rigid in their own thinking nor expecting that of others (Anglicanism is a theological BIG TENT and that should be true at St. Mary's) good mediator and manager.”

“Compelling pulpit speaker, community builder, engaging personality, compassionate leader.”

“Compassionate, insightful, shows strong leadership & can stay in step with changing times without abandoning our values, great sense of inclusiveness & community.”

“Our leader needs to be able to let the committees and support staff do their thing without trying to be a "boss." We have specific skill sets that aid the parish, behind the scenes, trust us that we are doing the right thing.”

“Centered and faithful within the Episcopal doctrine. Active commitment to social justice in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Compassion and understanding of others. Ability to communicate effectively. Understanding of and capacity for managerial and fiscal administration of the parish..”

“Relentless in pursuing God's intention for the church, accessible when needed, openness and willingness to finding real opportunities for church participation in the High Point community.”

WANTED

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



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VISIONARY

A strong rector is a person with the vision to see the possibilities within the parish and who has the talents and courage to lead the parish in new directions. A visionary rector is a person attuned to the needs within our parish and will work to grow our parish by continuing our tradition as a welcoming, inclusive church. A visionary rector is also attuned to the needs of the local community and will work to ensure St. Mary's is positioned to be a leader in serving our community.

"A person with vision for our church moving forward, and with the organizational skills to make it happen. A person who listens, who prays, and truly seeks the will of God for our church. A person who uses the gifts and talents in each member continue to make a difference in our community."

"Need a priest who is a great visionary. Looks not only inward but can expand on our current outreach and take in new directions."

"A visionary - someone who is forward looking, to help us become better in the future, not stay in the same place."

"Relentless in pursuing Gods intention for the church, accessible when needed, openness and willingness to finding real opportunities for church participation in the High Point community."

"Building a sense of community, where our church would have an impact and grow because people want to be a part of an active body of Christ.."

"1. A robust Friendship Table with many applicants and a congregation that fully assists with the work of the Friendship Table. 2. A robust Music program with many singers of all ages and musical programs. 3. A church fully open to all no matter their race, gender, background and situation in life 4. So successful with our last visioning process and stability of these programs that we start to think about where to go next while still maintaining our successes."

"Compassionate, insightful, shows strong leadership & can stay in step with changing times without abandoning our values, great sense of inclusiveness & community."

WANTED

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



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HOMILIST

Christian formation does not end with our confirmation and is not limited to bible study classes. The homily is the rector's best opportunity to directly speak to each parishioner. A strong homilist understands that spiritual growth is a continual process and will use the homily to offer us instruction on the meaning of the Gospel as well as the relevance of the Gospel in the modern world.

"Well prepared with attention paid to language and imagery Pacing/timing that keeps listeners engaged Thoroughly consistent with Judeo-Christian theology and Classical philosophy in dynamic dialogue with contemporary culture and concepts. A skilled approach to translating seemingly distant or cerebral ideas into personal experience."

"A memorable sermon makes the Scripture practical in how to live love and see others and myself from God's eyes, and a kingdom perspective. It stretches me to be at ease with mystery and to live into God's purpose and kingdom now."

"A good homily should place scripture at its core. It should interpret the Bible in its cultural and historical context as well as applying what we learn there to our own cultural moment. A memorable homily must ultimately answer one question: So what? Why should we care about what the preacher has just said? How are we to use his/her words in our daily lives? A homily that doesn't answer these questions fails to have any real impact."

"I most appreciate when a homilist is able to explain the historical context of a passage from scripture and further lay the case for how such context is relative to today's Christian life. In most cases, the historical context speaks to universal truths which are as germane to modern society as to ancient."

"Sermons are memorable when the listener can visualize what the preacher is conveying. Real-life stories that connect the scripture to the congregation have a strong impact. A memorable sermon also encourages, comforts and energizes the congregation all at once. A dynamic preacher achieves these things."

"New insight into the reading on which the sermon is based. A phrase or directive that I can consider throughout the week to come. A sense that the preacher is as committed to where the scripture is leading us as he/she professes from the pulpit."

WANTED

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



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LITURGIST

The liturgy is how we connect with God and should be an experience that creates a welcoming, inclusive feeling for each of us. St. Mary's recognizes that one size does not fit all so offers choices in our service opportunities. Our new rector will be expected to continue that tradition, working to offer each of us the best possible worship experiences.

"I would like a faith leader who is not afraid to be bold with change at times and still value the traditions we have set so far under David's leadership, e.g. changing the format of the informal service a few times each year so it doesn't get stale, Great Vigil of Easter, stations of the cross."

"Worship Diversity - we value formal worship but appreciate that informal services are offered. Beautiful and inviting facilities."

"I hope we can find a person who feels traditional values are as important as contemporary issues."

"Liturgy and music attracted us to the parish. The chance to hang around the church afterwards and meet people, to learn about the members and community."

"Early church service and other regular church services as well. Our wonderful church music. Strong leadership by the staff and a strong vestry involvement."

"I really enjoy and miss (during the times of covid) the informal service in the CLC at 9:00. Having the children play in the center during the early part of the service is like being in God's living room, old and young together as the Scriptures are read and the homily is preached. I hope we'll continue the informal service, and also continue with spiritual transformation and contemplative leadings such as centering prayer, and writing workshops."

WANTED

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.



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OTHER VALUES

The goal of the parish survey was to understand the values of St. Mary's. The preceding pages provide examples of the values that are specific to the characteristics we seek in a new rector. The following pages offer parishioner opinions regarding values that are bedrock for St. Mary's as well as hopes for the future.



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OUTREACH

Many responses in the survey spoke positively about outreach activities in our parish. In particular, parishioners pointed to our Community Life Center as an incredible asset for providing assistance to the community. In addition, many comments pointed to the recent use of the CLC for housing homeless men during the early part of the pandemic as an example of St. Mary's fulfilling our mission.

"Since the completion of the CLC, St. Mary's has reached out to serve the community in many ways through the use of that structure. The one that touched my heart the most was housing a group of men from Open Door Shelter for several months during the Covid pandemic in the summer of 2020. The church reached well beyond its own doors to love and serve others."

"Offering our Christ the King space to the Sudanese congregation made use of the CLC as it was envisioned, as a gift for the whole community. We are a wealthy parish and when we share our wealth in whatever form it shows up among us, then we are living into God's vision of the kingdom."

Our congregation really came together last summer when we housed 20 Covid at risk older guest from Open Door in our Community Life Center. Many congregation members provided weekend meals, snacks, water, toiletries and games for entertainment.

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OUTREACH

Responses also included other examples of the many outreach activities that St. Marians pursue:

“Partnering with "Caring Services" to refurbish and furnish a home for use as a half-way house for recovering addicts”

“When St. Mary's sponsored the creation of St. Christopher's as a mission church”

“The parish worked together to furnish Harris House, a part of West End Ministries. The project came out of the Matthew 25:40 committee but donations from many people in the parish brought the house to a reality for homeless women.”

“Hispanic Ministry-- The ESL program was an example where dedicated volunteers supported an urgent community need, which also worked in tandem with our Venture Scouts group, populated VBS and the Choir School. This was supported through the time of parishioners, the sharing of property resource, as well as financial backing. This was a special time that I remember fondly.”



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OUTREACH

Looking into the future, our congregation has expressed a desire to expand our outreach activities. Suggestions include identifying new uses for our campus to reach our community, supporting the Friendship Table as they work to address food insecurity, and for the church as an institution to be more involved in giving.

“Creating sustainable platforms for 1 serving the community in food insecurity issues, 2 racial reconciliation, unity, and inter-racial connections in relationship building perhaps with other churches and in the community.”

“That a greater % of our budget will be spent on local outreach; every member will feel included, cared for, and feel called to involvement through attendance at worship, as well as ministry outside and inside the parish; and will be moved to participate in annual giving as an act of gratitude.”

“For St. Mary's to be the most engaged church in the HP community”

“Utilizing our resources and spaces to reach even more people through outreach, liturgy and music, formation, and pastoral care.”

“I want us to keep filling the needs of our community in ways that are perhaps outside the box or in ways that other churches are not. I would like our biggest accomplishment to be all working together and not be divided in any way.”



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MUSIC MINISTRY

To say that St. Mary's has a rich musical history would be a gross understatement. For many at St. Mary's music is an integral and necessary piece of our worship experience.

"Music and liturgy are strongly intertwined and which I value most."

"St. Mary's is a "good music church" and has always been. This should be continued..."

"Pursuit of a beautiful Anglican music tradition"

"Music ministry is a mutual relationship between musicians and the congregation. When the St. Mary's choirs went to Canterbury Cathedral, the congregation worked to support the music ministry in several ways. New vestments were needed, and were quickly sponsored by church members. When funding was short for different facets of the trip, those needs were met. The congregation as a whole encouraged the choirs as they prepared a large amount of music, remained enthusiastic throughout the entire process, and welcomed them back with joy and curiosity about the trip."

"As a choir member for fifty years, the music program is obviously at the top of my list. The 11:00 traditional service. Opportunities to belong to a variety of groups to serve."

"Music program has been able to continue uninterrupted during pandemic. Credit to Charles Hogan for determining how to continue offering great music ministries under the restrictions that are in-place. Innovation and participation and solidarity."

"In your search, please give great consideration to the future of our music program. No one could have imagined the import of Covid barely two months after Charles Hogan became our new choirmaster/organist, or the changes that would follow. None of us knows what "normal" might be after we begin returning to church as usual, but I pray that our new rector will understand how "



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COMMUNITY

CoVid-19 has created many stresses for St. Marians, one of which is fractured community. A number of responses to the survey highlighted the issues and expressed a strong desire for a rector who can lead in rebuilding community.

"I'd like to see our relatively small membership get to know one another better...the younger, mostly 9:00 crowd mingling with the older 8 and 11 groups in intentional ways."

"I would like to see St. Mary's make a real difference in the lives of its members, bringing them closer to each other. I hope that we would do this by trying to make a real difference in the city of High Point, particularly as regards addressing social problems such as hunger."

"I hope we will have a stable or growing membership. I fear that the Covid situation will negatively impact our numbers when the pandemic is over."

"I'd like to see us back on the road we started before the pandemic. More opportunities to serve in the parish and an enriched investment in our community."

"I see St Mary's continuing its focus on outreach as we've done for so many years. I'd like to see our relatively small membership get to know one another better...the younger, mostly 9:00 crowd mingling with the older 8 and 11 groups in intentional ways."



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WELCOMING

Presiding Bishop Curry loves to preach a message of love and inclusion. St. Marians echoed his message, expressing a desire to see St. Mary's grow into the future as a welcoming church with a diversity of membership.

"I hope St. Mary's in three years will have become a bold leading voice in High Point on issues of race, anti-racism, and combatting homophobia. I also hope St. Mary's will have found a way to grow and expand the Friendship Table, and I hope it finds an innovative new approach to attracting young families to the parish."

"I hope we will increase our membership, especially young adults and that we will continue to welcome all, no matter their circumstances."

"I hope we will continue to grow and be inclusive to all. I hope we can attract more young people to the church so we even HAVE a future—for example the music program, all choir members are old or paid, and I don't see a lot of young people coming in to fill the spaces we will older members leave."

"Making St. Mary's a church that is welcoming to all regardless of race or sexual orientation. In three years I hope St. Mary's will be recognized as place where our door are always open and accepting of all!"

"I hope we will see a more diverse congregation — age, income and ethnicity; I also hope to see our parish create partnerships with other congregations in High Point, especially minority and non-Christian. I also hope the Friendship Table will become a thriving organization that encourages other churches to establish chapters."

"I would love to see our congregation become more culturally and economically diverse. The people we serve in the community aren't just charity cases. They are potential members of our church family. I would also love for St. Mary's to be widely known as a place that welcomes and encourage LGBTQ people to become part of our church. I'd also like to see our choirs continue to grow and connect with music ministry outside of the church building. We have the facility and staff to spearhead an ecumenical choir festival, for instance."