

## 2021 St. Christopher's Narrative Answers to OTM Questions

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

Our "year" began with the Covid shutdown, followed by Fr. Peter's short illness and sudden death. But everyone put their grief on hold, not only got organized to keep the parish running, but we also grew in caring and compassion to see us through a very difficult time.

A technology-challenged congregation went from in-person only to Zoom services twice a week and later extended to FaceBook. Some weeks our FB views reach over 300. A full time working senior warden now the one responsible for the parish. Our PIC's last sermon was for our seminarian's July ordination to the diaconate; our newly ordained deacon and the bishop interred the ashes of our PIC in our columbarium. Expanded our lay pastoral care ministry from 3 lay and 1 clergy, to 5 lay and 5 clergy persons (2 bilingual). Contacted nearly every household every week. Finalized our Regathering Plan and worked to have the bishop approve it. Re-envisioning how we are the church, our recent driveway neighborhood food drive brought in more food and more \$\$\$ than all of 2020.

On the verge of reopening for outdoor worship, we are closer than ever

### **Q 2: Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community**

Pre-Covid – no virtual: Sun: Eng svc in sanctuary, Rite II. 1982 Hymnal or WLP sung earnestly by choir & tentatively by congregation. Organ, keyboard, or baby grand accompaniment. Coffee Hour; Sp svc in sanctuary – El Libro de Oración Común, hymns from Flor y Canto, sung joyfully and whole-heartedly. Guitar, electronic keyboard, cello, & vocal. Shared meal in Parish Hall; Korean svc in chapel – Assembly of God Korean congregation. Shared meal in Parish Hall. Wed 10am – Healing Eucharist in Chapel. Homily often a joint priest-congregation reflection on lessons. Monthly, Healing Svc. Palm Sunday many bring bunnies or small stuffed animals for children of clients at Eve's Place (women's shelter), local food bank, and parish children. A few times a yr: Combined bilingual svc. Covid – All virtual; Sun – Social time / Eng svc; hymns recorded on electric keyboard / played thru Zoom; Sun – Sp svc; El Libro de Oración Común, no hymns; Wed – Social time / Eng Morning Prayer

### **Q 3: How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?**

Our leadership is collaborative. Our worship and ministries, participatory. Our leadership ranks are thin and reluctant. We have few natural leaders, but our congregation is willing, even eager. All are invited and encouraged to find unique callings ... to find what God is asking them to do in this place at this time to build God's kingdom here on earth. We develop discipleship, not just fill slots to do good work but are about bringing others into worship, learning, fellowship, & more, not just getting things done. We transform lives, and in doing so, transform our own.

Sign-up sheets & ministry fairs are less & less effective. We try to do "individual asks". We adopted Invite | Welcome | Connect in 2017. Time & Talent cards info are collected as part of Fall stewardship and entered into our membership database. Throughout the year we rely on that data. We are interested in people, and as we learn about them at coffee hour, cook outs, or other social events, we share what we do and try to introduce them to someone doing something matching their interests. About 75% of our parishioners take part in at least one ministry, with most in at least three different ministries.

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

A very supportive welcoming church family. Our pastoral care team is quietly well-informed of needs, troubles, losses, or just because someone hasn't been seen lately. Clergy and lay ministers offer communion, prayers, a concerned ear, in homes, care facilities, hospitals, or virtually. Our Callers and Cards & Calls teams stay in touch with personal messages.

Spiritual: Sun & Wed svcs; Healing: Sun: Mo'ly ; Wed wk'ly - homily often a joint priest-congregation reflection on lessons; Combined bilingual svc 3 or 4 times a year. Advent & Lenten bible studies; Men's Bible Workbench, Women's Bible Study.

Emotional/Physical/Social: Wk'ly Coffee Hour / Eng & Shared Meal / Sp; We build bridges between services and a Korean congregation using our chapel (potluck suppers, chili contest, women's tea, neighborhood cookouts. Ministries: Mo'ly Men's Breakfast, MP, and sandwich outreach for homeless; Mo'ly women's gatherings; Prayer Shawl; Prayer Chain, Baby Blanket / Quilt ministries; Concerts & Special Events. We seek a joyful celebrant to lead & support spiritual growth for all.

**Q 5: How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?**

Pastoral care for St C's is primarily, but not entirely, inward focused. Working to heal our broken world is the ministry of our Outreach team. We are, what a parishioner has dubbed "the little church that could." With strong leadership, vision, and congregational engagement, we have moved from scattered drives to focused partnerships locally, in AZ, and in Kenya. We balance hands-on and fundraising. We continually evaluate projects to ensure we meet the needs of St C's and community and are effectively transforming lives. Our efforts are organized around Matthew 25. We meet monthly to coordinate. We organize a variety of drives throughout the year and distribute both funds and in-kind offerings to projects that meet basic human needs, including food, clothing, and shelter. We strive to build partnerships with other community organizations to maximize our efforts. Please see [StChristophers-az.org/outreach](http://StChristophers-az.org/outreach) .

**Q 6: Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region**

Diocesan engagement: reading at bilingual virtual svc, involved & engaged at convention & lay leadership retreats, Best Skills/Best Churches pgm, and at diocesan webinars, virtual svcs, and meetings. Although many parishioners prefer outreach close to home: Valley View (food bank), Eve's Place (domestic violence advocacy), CAN (seniors help), sandwiches for homeless (Salvation Army), & Bargains Galore (our thrift store that involves about 25% of our congregation supplying low priced clothes, household goods, tools, and décor pieces), we also have growing outreach pgms on the Navajo Reservation and in Kenya. Light Up the Rez! adds solar panels to houses; it has caught the imagination and heart of many. We now support network and virtual learning on the reservation. In Kenya, what began as supporting 1 girl at a school, now supports 3, financial support for a COVID outbreak, and help with washable, reusable, durable, beautiful menstrual health products. We support Cruzando Fronteras (diocesan border ministry) sending toys for the Posadas Toy Drive for children of migrants, refugees, detainees and all who live in the AZ / Sonora Corridor. Please see [StChristophers-az.org/outreach](http://StChristophers-az.org/outreach) .

**Q 7: Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past 5 years. Who can be contacted about this?**

Both inReach and outReach have major successes to share:

Our Covid response (inReach—contact Doreen Rohrer, Parish Admin)

Suddenly superseding all in-person activities with no way to reach many, gave rise to our *Phone Tree Callers*, While a challenge to move everything to online (worship, vestry meetings, ministry leader meetings, etc), the biggest challenge was notifying folks. We are not high-tech & hadn't had a phone tree in decades, but within a week we had 10 people calling 10 families to get the word out. It's grown and nearly every family is contacted ea wk with news of their church family. That's over 13,000 contacts last year!

*Light up the Rez!* (outReach – contact Hugh Duncan).

Mylo Fowler, a world-famous photographer, is Navajo and grew up on the reservation doing his homework by kerosene lantern in a house without electricity or running water. He uses his work to fund solar panels and batteries to provide lights for homes on the reservation, one at a time -- over 15k

homes on the reservation are without electricity. We began working with Mylo hoping to be able to light 10 homes, but the ministry has taken off and we have enough to light 50, so far!

**Q 8: How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?**

We worship, study, & plan together, as we build our church and community. We recently updated our strategic plan and refreshed our parish goals to move us forward in a post-Covid world: Integrate & engage our ministries to be known as a caring, loving, vibrant community both in-person and online; Develop a successful strategy for financial self-sufficiency; strengthening our endowment to ensure our financial health and sustainability; implementation of Planned Giving to complete our strong stewardship program; Develop a comprehensive Christian Ed program for parishioners of all ages.

Continue things that began during Covid: Expand our services, meetings, and ministries to virtual when we resume in-person gatherings for those unable to attend for any reason; Our Phone Tree Callers, begun soon after our suspension, made over 13k calls checking on each of our 113 families weekly. It was invaluable as we moved through our grief, unable to worship or mourn together During our suspension, we took care of facility repairs and upgrades.

Resume Doorbell Ringing inviting neighbors to concerts, cookouts, events, thrift store & bookstore and community events: concerts, talks

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

All that we have is a gift from God; stewardship is the regular practice of returning to God a portion of all that He has given us. We are joyful givers. Giving of time and talent is as important as giving of treasure. Annual pledging focuses on incremental increases toward a tithe. Our financial stewardship is broad, but we do need and do not currently have, a planned giving ministry. We accept ach, eGiving, and text gifts. Our income does not cover our expenses; our deficit is a known challenge that we continue to work toward closing. We seek an entrepreneurial rector who will work with us to: Develop successful strategies for financial self-sufficiency; Increase membership by 8-10% / yr to better live out our discipleship with our neighbors and in our communities. We are already growing by 4% / yr.

We're moving to year-round giving. We are developing a Creation Care ministry, bringing together disjointed ministries including paper, aluminum cans & metal, and plastic recycling; eliminating plastic or Styrofoam; and greater use of recycled products. Buildings and Grounds cares for our campus, honoring our house of God with both talent and time.

**Q 10: What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? How have you addressed it?**

Most parishioners at St. C's do not believe we have. But there have been a variety of matters costing us vestry members, a willingness to participate in leadership, or even leaving St C's or the church entirely. Some involve societal changes within the church outside our control. Others were in our control (hiring a woman priest, starting our Hispanic Ministry, moving the choir room, or painting the patio). In each case, the decision process was problematic. For many, the impact of the change on the broader congregation was underestimated. Without seeking and incorporating enough input and providing enough active communication between leadership and the parish, conflict emerged and escalated. Unfortunately, parishioners have left over various matters. There's even been conflict within vestry, and we've adopted and updated "vestry norms". We've worked with a conflict consultant from ECF. We work to the point of reducing the active pain, become overcome by other events. and drop the matter. This leaves buried hurt feelings. We strive for forgiveness, or like stones in the rapids, the hurt is worn down, and we move on continuing to work for the general good of St C's.

**Q 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?**

Our next leader should know that St. Christopher's is a place that prioritizes open and cooperative relationships among clergy, lay leadership, and the congregation. We generally manage to keep these relationships healthy, respectful, and productive; however, conflict does arise from time to time, and when it surfaces, it is usually because the norms of collaboration, cooperation, and consensus have been violated.

On the other hand, we have leaned into collaboration and teamwork over the last year and done more "changing" than many of us thought possible. This year we've been reminded what is important. We have changed everything, and nothing. We have services twice a week in Eng & once in Sp. We have vestry monthly. We do it all virtually. We check on every family, usually weekly. Many members and much of leadership are much more technical than they thought they'd ever be. We take care of each other; we worship; we thank. We have found ways to feed, clothe, and care. We are the church, whether our doors are open or not. What we've learned is what's important, and that we CAN change and change quickly, if we need to, and we needed to. We are at our best when we do it together.

**Q 12: Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.**

Servant Leader; Entrepreneurial; Inspired; Compassionate Advocate; Relatable; Collaborative.