

Create Community Ministry Portfolio

Name of worshipping community: St. Johns Episcopal Bellefonte

Diocese: Central Pennsylvania

Current Status:

Order of ministry required:

Bishop Deacon Lay Lay or Ordained X **Priest**

Position Title: **Rector**

Receiving Names until: **June 30 2024**

Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA): 2022 45 – 50 , 2023 50 - 55

Number of Weekend Worship Services: **2**

Number of Weekday Worship Services: **2**

Number of Other per Month Worship Services: **As required**

Institution Phone: 814-355-0497

Institution Email: Saint John's Parish Office <office@stjohnsepiscopalbellefonte.org>

Institution Location

Street: 120 W. Lamb St

Additional:

City: Bellefonte

State/Province: Pennsylvania

Postal code: 16823

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NARRATIVE (1200 character limit including punctuation and spaces for each question)

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

St. John's faced sudden and dramatic challenges during the Covid 19 pandemic, but we have not seen a dramatic drop in attendance or participation in the life of our parish. This anomaly may be the consequence of immediate response to problems and the renewed sense of mutual aid that followed. In 2020, some of our elders became gravely ill while living alone, our common worship and fellowship suddenly ceased, and our children were cut off from school and friends. Through the leadership of an energetic priest and the help of members, meals were delivered to the ill; streaming equipment was purchased and a streaming service established for worship; activity packets were mailed to the children; outdoor mass was held for older youth; and Palm Sunday celebrated as a drive-up event. A spirit of creativity and mutual aid kindled during that time continues in various ways; for example, our streaming service continues to draw members with mobility challenges to weekly worship, and our youth lend a hand to help elderly members with yard work. Instead of isolating us, the pandemic has made us more mindful of the vulnerability and preciousness of all lives.

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

St. John's Episcopal Church is the lone "High Church" parish in the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania. Sunday worship consists of two masses. The 9 a.m. Low Mass includes a sermon and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, but no music. It lasts about 40 minutes. At 10:30 a.m., the principal weekly service is offered. The celebration of the Eucharist is a High Mass, with the priest singing certain parts of the service, sung responses from the choir and congregation, and incense used on High Holy Days. The service normally lasts about an hour. On Tuesdays, lay leaders provide a weekly prayer service at 5:15 pm. On Thursdays, a Low Mass follows the 5:15 pm. prayers. This contemporary-language service has no music or sermon, but does have a healing rite, so members of the congregation can receive laying-on-of-hands and anointing with prayers for healing. These services last about 30-45 minutes.

3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Members are invited to join our group projects through church announcements, the monthly newsletter, and sign-up sheets. St. John's also takes advantage of digital platforms to keep parishioners informed through a recently redesigned website and an active Facebook page. The Priest, Deacon, Vestry members, and other leaders personally invite members to be involved in ministries. Opportunities during ceremonies include altar service, assisting in the celebration of the Eucharist, serving as scripture reader, and acting as greeter to welcome parishioners. Those interested may also serve on the Altar Guild to help maintain the linens used during services. Other volunteers assist with yard work and decorations for Holy Days. St. John's provides a weekly Coffee Hour after the 10 a.m. service, and parishioners sign up to host one of these events. Volunteers also assist with fund-raising dinner events, such as the Shrove Tuesday

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Pancake dinner, March Corned Beef dinner, etc. Finally, events including the Lenten Program and Men's Group allow parishioners to delve more deeply into Scripture and provide additional fellowship opportunities.

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

St. John's is a close-knit community, and we come together in support of any member who is in special need. We believe that it is through community that the well-being of the parish is maintained. We offer a broad range of activities that encourage participation and a spirit of giving, both within the parish and throughout the broader community. We believe that it is essential to include all parishioners—young and old—in this spirit, and we demonstrate our commitment through our Sunday School program and adult education programs that foster the development of a spiritual life. Additionally, our Deacon provides a weekly men's group, and the young adults meet regularly for spiritual growth and fellowship.

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

Wider Church: Our small parish has been a valuable site of nurture and learning for individuals on the way to ordination. In the past five years, we have partnered with our companion parish, St. Andrew's State College, to provide opportunities and support for two newly-ordained priests as well as a third candidate who will be ordained in June. We also collaborate with St. Andrew's to offer unique worship services for special days, such as The Feast of the Annunciation. The two churches occasionally host events together, joining the forces of our acolytes, servers, and choir. We send delegates to our Diocesan Convention every year. Our clergy have been active on Diocesan Committees, including Liturgy & Music, Commission on Ministry, Liturgical Commission, and Standing Committee.

Geographical Region: We extend our service to the community by collaborating with several local organizations, for example:

- we provide a children's community garden for the Bellefonte Youth Center.
- we serve bi-monthly dinners for children from the Bellefonte Youth Center.
- we supply donations and volunteer assistance for our local food bank, FaithCentre.
- our Parish Hall hosts regular Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

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

Our deacon, Rev. Alex Dyakiw, is active in ministering to those beyond our church community. He has visited residents of CentreCare and other nursing homes. He facilitates study and prayer at the local prisons, and has been a source of comfort and support to many hospitalized patients and their families. His commitment to Out of the Cold, the local shelter for unhoused people in our region, involves frequent meals and donations. Alex is assisted by parishioners from time to time, particularly at CentreCare.

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

Within the past five years, we have initiated a number of projects that directly serve our community. In addition to the weekly collection of food, we have pooled resources to purchase gift cards for gas, groceries, or clothing for Center Safe, a resource center that assists survivors of sexual or domestic violence. A few years ago, we created a raised-bed garden in the Rectory yard for use of children at the Bellefonte Youth Center (BYC). Besides learning gardening skills and healthy eating habits, the children also grow spiritually and enjoy the fruits of their labor. Church volunteers help to maintain the garden throughout the summer. This past year, Ellen Dyakiw, our Sunday School director, began providing weekly craft and education programs at BYC. Church members now also volunteer to prepare a dinner meal for BYC twice a month. Contact the Senior Warden for details.

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

We are an intimate congregation, and our size allows us to operate as a close-knit and caring community. We believe that “bigger is not always better.” Nevertheless, we actively update and maintain our website and Facebook page to communicate broadly in the digital age. Our newsletters, calendar, events, and other parish announcements are distributed both electronically and in hard-copy form. We believe strongly in following Christ’s teachings to accept all individuals, and we strive to welcome all visitors. *We recognize and affirm that all of God's children are welcome, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. If all are not welcome, none are truly welcome.* The church of the future begins with investment by the church members of today, so we are committed to teach and involve our young people during their formative years. We hope they will share our desire and commitment to continue the traditions and work of their church as they grow into adulthood. Our now well-established children’s program has provided a strong foundation for the church to come.

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

Year round, St. John’s actively stewards our community’s time, treasures, and talents. For our fall pledge campaign, we no longer canvass members at home, nor does the rector speak at length about the subject. Rather, the rector sends a letter to every parish household with a pledge card and percentage goal calculator card, then gently ties in occasional sermon parts to general stewardship issues. Pledge income is augmented by special gifts (some of which have their own envelopes), fund-raising through meals that involve the members in a shared cooking and serving tasks (e.g. Sausage and Pierogi, Shrove Tuesday Pancakes, Corned Beef around St. Patrick’s Day), and fees for renting the Parish Hall. We also rely on supplemental endowment funds. We have been very consistent about meeting, if not exceeding, our budget for many years, and we have successfully raised additional funds, as necessary, for projects involving our buildings and grounds. People willingly pitch in to help with these activities, as well as with outreach to local ministries (e.g., the Food Bank and BYC), thus building a warm and dedicated worshipping community with a can-do attitude.

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

When dealing with occasional conflict, our approach at St. John's has been to discuss it and then to give things time to settle. Controversial issues are discussed in scheduled vestry meetings; for example, we needed to work through decisions regarding major construction to the church buildings. If a conflict arises, we remember that different opinions have a place in our congregation. Many issues have nothing to do with our common faith. There might be a complaint about too much incense or a service that lasts too long. Rarely have we faced serious situations that caused us to call on the bishop for guidance. During those harder times, we believe it is important to focus on who we are and why we come together in faith—and to make sure that others who might not agree with us have a place in our congregation as well.

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?

The strength of relationships within our congregation and our shared commitment to the parish have enabled our church to make a smooth transition between the tenures of our last few full-time priests, despite their different styles of worship. Growth in our Sunday school program several years back compelled us to expand the size and range of its facility, requiring us to move our chapel to the back of the church sanctuary. Although this change required some adjustment, this congregation respected the leadership enough to accept it. More recently, some members of the congregation have disagreed about the position of the altar and the use of incense. Our discernment process has found that the majority of our members prefer that the Rector face the congregation as much as possible and that incense be used only on High Holy Days. These questions will need to be resolved in conversation with the new priest. In the meantime, written updates in the monthly parish newsletter and weekly emails extend communication within the community beyond word of mouth.

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

Effective preaching, inspirational leadership, pastoral care, youth work, organizational and managerial skills, community engagement.