Worshipping Community Portfolio Questions

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

One recent moment in our worshipping community that we recognize as one of success and fulfillment was when we received a request to participate in an outreach project with God’s Pit Crew, a local disaster relief organization that delivers “blessing buckets” containing emergency supplies to victims of natural disasters. What made this event rise above the rest was the energy of our congregation, young and old, coming together to shop for, pack, and load 100 buckets onto a truck. We effectively reached out on a local level while involving virtually the entire congregation. This left a lasting impression on everyone involved.

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

We are excited about becoming a missional church of the future. We are anxious to learn and partner with a new rector who has those skills. We have participated in a missional interim process with a transition coach and using a team approach for supply clergy. We are currently partnering in a youth exchange with a church in Bradford, England.

3. Provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping


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

We are a Broad church that embraces our Episcopal traditions in the use of The Book of Common Prayer. We celebrate the Eucharist weekly with Rite I (8:00 A.M.) and Rite II (10:30 A.M.). The Rite II service is enhanced by the music ministry. We hold healing and Evensong services, foot-washing for Maundy Thursday, and Stations of the Cross for Good Friday. We incorporate on any given Sunday contemporary liturgy in the form of our Gloria, benediction, and introit from contemporary sources. We have also incorporated liturgical dance into our services. The youth have held contemporary services in the parish hall.
Our strong family-oriented culture encourages the older and younger parishioners to pray together, sing together, worship together, and serve the community outside of our doors together.

5. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

With frequent communication among members of our church, we are able to invite parishioners of all ages to participate in lay reading, ushering, watching the nursery, teaching Sunday school, and hosting coffee hour. We encourage our youth to become acolytes at an early age and to participate in the liturgy. We have parishioners of all ages who play instruments during the service when appropriate. The coffee hour at the end of the 10:30 a.m. service is a time for fellowship as well as a time to explore opportunities available for volunteering. We provide welcome gift bags to visitors, we have a Facebook page, we have a process in place for clergy to answers calls and for clergy or Lay Eucharistic Ministers to schedule visits. Introductory email contact is presently made by the parish administrator.

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

Our spiritual well-being is enhanced through regular worship services and by Lay Eucharistic ministers as well as by Congregational Forums, which are held each Sunday morning. We have guest speakers from community service groups speak on their work, members of the congregation present programs on various topics, and we have had Bible study during the week. We occasionally watch a movie with a social message and have a spirited discussion afterward. We promote our emotional well-being with our Men’s Group, Ladies Night Out, mailing of handmade birthday cards to every member, recognition for anniversaries, Healing Services, and our caring church community. Our physical well-being is supported by regular blood-pressure checks, weekly yoga classes, Sneaker Sunday, a Good Samaritan Handicap Equipment Room, a defibrillator, and a health bulletin board. We have recently made our church fully handicapped accessible by installing a lift.

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

Grace Memorial is actively engaged in pastoral care for people outside our worshipping community. We are involved with feeding the homeless and those recovering from substance abuse as well as driving for Meals on Wheels. We also give temporary help to the homeless by providing them with backpacks filled with necessities. Our church is quite generous with financial resources following natural disasters. In the spring of 2016, we gave a generous donation though St Anne’s Episcopal Church for the tornado victims of Appomattox. We also have a genuine interest in supporting the youth and literacy education in the Lynchburg area. We support the Jubilee Center, the Campbell...
County literacy volunteers, Heifer Project and have raised money for mosquito netting and the Potato Project.

8. Describe your worshipping community’s involvement in either the wider Church or Geographical Region.

We are very proud of the monetary donations to organizations outside our church, especially to our diocese, to which we donate ten percent of our budget. In the southwestern Appalachian communities, where our diocese has a facility that helps the struggling people there, we have sent members on week-long trips to help rebuild homes and lives. We are a sister church to a parish in Bradford, England, and we engage in exchanges of clergy and youth. We are also involved in the local ministerial association, attend diocesan convocations, and have supported seminarians. Our church contributes food weekly to the Blue Ridge Regional Food Bank. Occasionally, our youth make the delivery to the food bank.

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

The ministry that we have initiated in the last five years is our involvement with the Fort Hill Community School, a facility serving students with emotional, medical, and behavioral issues from the school systems of Lynchburg and surrounding counties. A few years ago the school needed a place for potential emergency evacuations and knocked on our door for help. It was the beginning of a wonderful partnership. Since then we have partnered with them to offer cooking, painting, and sewing classes. We also give Angel Tree presents to the students at Christmas, cook and serve Thanksgiving dinner for students and their families, and provide financial resources for the school. The students have painted two pianos for our church, and the cooking classes have invited parish members for lunch on occasion. We also serve a lunch in our parish hall for faculty and staff on a teacher work day at the beginning of the school year. The contact person is the Principal, Kathy Viar at 434-515-5150.

10. What is your practice of stewardship, and how does it shape the life of your worshipping

We emphasize total stewardship with the giving of time, talent, and treasure. We have volunteers contributing in many ways. They answer the phones in the church office and clean and prepare the altar area. Some volunteers keep track of our finances and make sure expenses are taken care of properly. In addition, there are volunteers that repair and maintain the building and grounds, and others who provide food for a coffee hour after the weekly service and the frequent covered dish meals that accompany other functions at the church. Others fill duties in lay reading, ushering, assisting the rector as chalichists, and singing in the choir. Members have volunteered their time, talent, and
treasure in Appalachia to help rebuild lives and locally with Habitat for Humanity to help build homes. The contribution that Grace Memorial makes to the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia helps programs outside our locality. Financially, our church is sound. In preparation of our budget, we have a Stewardship Sunday in the fall, which apprises the congregation of the financial needs of the church and reminds them of the annual pledge drive.

11. What is your worshipping community’s experience of conflict? How have you addressed it?

Just as every family experiences conflict, so does every church. Grace Memorial has experienced conflict involving national church and in-house issues. One example is the consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson in 2003. It created great concern for some members of Grace. Rather than addressing the issue and the reasons behind it, it was not addressed and we lost members as a result. It has been our history that conflict has not been adequately discussed. We desire a leader who values all opinions and encourages conversations about divisive issues. We feel this is the way to make our congregation stronger. We look forward to a pastoral-centered leader who will help us face up to these challenges and learn how to deal with them.

12. What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? What did you learn?

Even though we were aware for some time of the impending retirement of our rector, it has been a challenge for the members of Grace Memorial. We have learned that change can be good if the church community embraces it. As we engaged in our search process, through cottage meetings and congregational meetings, we gained a new and deeper understanding of our fellow parishioners. We are learning to listen to each other and to value each other’s opinions. We have made a concerted effort to inform the congregation every step of the way through the search process. Some members have struggled with the length of the search process, but weekly communications have helped. We have experimented with a new format for our Sunday bulletin and our selection of service music. Some people have welcomed the changes and others have been uncomfortable with the changes. We have had no vehicle for addressing change but we are willing, ready and able to be involved in a healthy dialogue process with a new rector. We have practiced patience and learned that the Holy Spirit works in a very deliberate way.