

Ministry Portfolio - Christ Church Oberlin Ohio, March 2021
Submitted as part of the Office of Transitional Ministry (OTM) questionnaire
Responses limited to 1200 characters

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

The pandemic provided an opportunity to worship in creative ways; we purchased video and sound equipment to record and broadcast the Sunday service, and members of the congregation could participate again as lectors. Coming together virtually and simply seeing people in the Church was fulfilling.

Chatting with a volunteer who was distributing hot meals, curbside. It showed the dedication and vision needed to transform Oberlin Weekday Community Meals (OWCM) from "sit-down" into take-out meals.

Christmas Eve or Easter, when the church is full with parishioners, families and guests with special music.

Service of Pentecost, when many parishioners speak a sentence from the Epistle in different languages.

Installation of the Daughters of the King chapter, with members from three local Episcopal churches.

Planting for Tomorrow Campaign, a Diocese-wide effort that benefited parishes that participated; it was fulfilling to see the support from parishioners and realization of the ambitious goals of that 5-year campaign.

Participation in the 200th anniversary of the Diocese.

Blessing of Bellwether Farm with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry: it was a glorious service of dedication and inspiration.

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

We need to integrate and enhance our outreach ministries with strategies to increase community awareness of our presence and activities. Consideration should be given for worship on alternate days, with less formal liturgy, more modern music and service-related activities that may appeal to younger folk. Flexibility, adapting to change and learning new skills by broadcasting the worship service may help in this regard.

Individual personal interviews to determine how the parish sees itself, its place in the local community, and how it relates to social issues has been enlightening.

We desire to be more purposeful about diversity, equity and inclusion. The Vestry has begun a visioning process.

The former Music Minister initiated a new children's choir from the three churches in Lorain County. We hope to reconvene that group in the coming year.

Installation of a new rose window, replacing one that was deteriorating: this beautiful work of art, with creative input from the primary donor, it is an example of investing in our infrastructure, as is the extensive renovation to the Rectory.

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

Ability and desire to understand and embrace the parish and community, and lead the parish in formulating, articulating and pursuing its vision.

Ability to relate well personally and compassionately with all persons in the parish, recognizing the diversity in age, social condition and needs of individuals.

Ability and desire to be the face of parish leadership in the local community, and to lead parishioners in raising parish visibility.

Attracting and increasing greater diversity of the parish in terms of age, ethnicity, social condition, etc. Connect especially with families, strengthen ties to the college community.

Ability to formulate and deliver meaningful sermons that relate to daily matters of life, and relate to Christian values.

Future leaders need the ability to *dance* with a partner, with a lightness of spirit, with all people.

Appreciating and using music as an avenue to praise and worship God.

Embracing the ministry of hospitality.

Compassionate honesty allowing for civil disagreement and identifying paths forward.

Appreciation of the importance of liturgy and talented musicians as part thereof.

Teaching how to use prayer in daily life.

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

Generally, follow Rite II of the *BCP* and guidance from Diocesan and Presiding Bishops. The early Sunday service is spoken and quieter and more meditative than the later service which incorporates music as a vital part of the service. Music is mostly traditional with preludes and postludes from the classical canon. Contemporary music has been incorporated occasionally, as have liturgical elements from other Anglican churches. Regardless of Rite, liturgy or music, worship at Christ Church incorporates contemplation.

Parishioners have expressed interest in more diverse musical offerings – without too radical of a change.

Morning Prayer was offered every weekday (except Wednesday) before the pandemic, rotating leadership among four parishioners – this was strictly following the *BCP*, including intercessory prayer for the entire parish prayer list.

Weekday Eucharist (said, not sung) was offered on Wednesday at 8am; parishioners in attendance usually numbered fewer than four.

Evening Prayer has been offered during Lent and Advent (one evening a week) or only during Holy Week in other years. Choir rehearsal always ended with Compline.

5. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

The laity have important roles in daily worship and all are encouraged to participate as they feel called: acolyte, usher, Eucharistic minister, healing minister, lector, altar guild, choir, adult forum leader, Sunday School teacher, coffee hour host, worship leader for the daily office, lay preacher, bringing communion to others unable to get to church.

Service to the community such as OWCM, Mission Endowment, North Central Mission Area, Province V and Diocesan activities are other important opportunities. OWCM is a separate non-profit and brings people from various traditions, churched and unchurched, together to serve those in need.

College student ministry revolved around weekly gathering for lunch and conversation, prepared by volunteer parishioners and held at the Rectory – then moved to a parishioner's home. The Rector

and others continued to participate. More recently, the Associate Rector has led weekly conversations with youth, both high school and college students, on Zoom.

Parishioners are involved in other pursuits in their professional and personal lives that can be seen as ministering to others.

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

The Parish Prayer list is an important mechanism for keeping us spiritually connected, as is calling on those who are ill or otherwise unable to attend service.

Adult forum and book study groups are very much appreciated. The congregation needs encouragement to take initiative in these efforts; it's too easy to depend on the Rector. Others would step forward but are often waiting for 'permission'.

The most routine activity that brought us together and served to at least bolster emotional well-being through a sense of community was coffee hour after the 10:30am service. Participation had dropped off quite a bit in the past year or two (before the pandemic), as the makeup of the parish changed and people's priorities (and demands on their schedules) changed.

Parish retreat days (or evenings) were occasionally held and very well-received. A potluck or a simple supper followed by a film and discussion was offered one Lenten season – again, these were very much appreciated by those who participated. Weekly Bible study, related to the Lectionary and led by Rector, was highly valued. Book study and discussion (during Advent or Lent, typically) was also highly valued by participants.

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

OWCM is our primary engagement, as it involves volunteers and clients from the wider community. Oberlin Area Cooperating Ministries (OACM) has potential. In the past, the Rector and at least one parishioner actively participated in leadership of OACM. It is now essentially moribund, due to lack of participation from enough different churches/faith communities to make it viable. It has an important, unrealized role, for interfaith collaboration.

The parish gives financially to Oberlin Community Services, and parishioners have given faithfully to their community pantry and the "holiday helping hands" program which provides gifts to hundreds of children and youth.

Our Mission Endowment Board provides funds to individuals and ministries.

Participating in the Diocese Convocation is a service opportunity beyond our parish. Parishioners also serve with or contribute to community organizations such as the Ruby Jones Community Scholarship Fund, the Oberlin Schools Endowment Fund, Oberlin Community Services, municipal commissions, and others.

Leading the Bible Study at Kendal at Oberlin (in collaboration with the Rector) involves individuals other than church members.

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

One or two individuals serve as North Central Mission Area (NCMA) Council representatives. A small number of parishioners have participated in Diocesan and Province V committees or initiatives.

Church funds that exceed our operational needs are invested in the Diocese Joint Investment Fund, to the benefit of both the parish and the "JIF".

In the past, the church has been visible in Oberlin community activities on the central square in town (animal blessing, distributing water, welcoming new college students to campus). We now have fewer people able to give time to these community events.

Financial support for Bellwether Farm was a central feature of the Planting for Tomorrow Campaign.

A Women's Spirituality Group was active many years ago; it included women from other churches in the NCMA. A retreat at Bellwether in 2019 was intended to become an annual event for women in NCMA.

Some parishioners participated in the Bishop's Bike Ride, raising funds for particular ministries; church members hosted bike riders.

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

Visiting shut-in parishioners to bring flowers from the altar (or communion), is a long-standing practice. It was expanded to include reading to individuals with seriously debilitating medical conditions (either in person or by making recordings), driving those individuals to church, and keeping them connected to the church community as much as possible.

The church sponsored an anti-racism workshop; we need to build upon this.

Designated a portion of the Planting for Tomorrow campaign to fund a Curate for Youth Ministry, shared with St. Andrews, Elyria.

Suspended worship in response to COVID-19 pandemic, out of an abundance of caution and care for worshipers and worship leaders. This development was a radical change, not one followed by all communities of faith.

Developed the means for online worship within six months of "COVID lock-down".

Engaged Choral Scholars from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, with payment, to join our choir; one position is now designated with endowed funds. Scholars have contributed to the cohesion of the choir, in their participation both as musicians and fellow worshippers, and make the music program more appealing to the congregation.

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

Our parish is blessed with financial resources – but, a great percentage of that support is received from parishioners who are well-advanced in age. It does not bode well for the future, unless we diversify our congregation.

Our stewardship philosophy is that annual pledged resources are dedicated to temporal needs (heat/water/electricity etc.), while our corporate stewardship responsibility is directed towards ministry and living out our faith.

Regarding Chapel Grove: the transformation of part of the property into space for meditation, worship, fellowship, and interment of cremains, exemplifies stewardship of the grounds for a sacred purpose. Several people have had their ashes interred there, and we have kept a record of who, where and when. Unfortunately, the outdoor play space (adjacent to Chapel Grove) has fallen into disuse and needs a makeover in order to appeal to children again.

Our current stewardship practice lacks focus beyond what we are already doing. We need to take advantage of traditional pledge drives to engage the congregation in discussion of new ministry opportunities and initiatives to draw more people to the Church.

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

Conflict-averse is a fair description of this community. Rather than face conflicts head-on, we are more likely to simply shut down rather than discuss or debate resolution. Members have left, either temporarily or permanently, rather than stay and work on a resolution. The Vestry and Interim Rector recognize this and will incorporate an understanding of it in our visioning for the future.

Conflict is often the result of a change. Those instituting or recommending change must do a better job of explaining the 'Why' and those responding to change must be more open first to the 'Why' and then engage in the 'What' and the 'How'.

Conflict has not been particularly visible lately, to most parishioners. As the congregation has dwindled, diversity has become less obvious, and so conflicts are fewer. We tend to work things out "in committee," and ratify it at the annual meeting.

We are aware that individuals have stopped attending worship and other church-related events, but the cause of leaving is not always obvious. Some people who left the church due to conflict with a former Rector ultimately came back after that Rector left.

12. 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?

Planning for Fr. Brian's sabbaticals let us shoulder more administrative responsibility; e.g., newsletter content and production, Christian formation, representing Christ Church to the OACM, greeting the supply priest, handling Properties matters, etc., demonstrated how the Rector should

delegate more responsibilities to parishioners.

The biggest change was Fr. Brian's retirement after twenty years as spiritual leader. We held a memorable "celebration of shared ministry," welcomed Pastor Jimmy to shepherd us for a bit, followed by Rev. Sarah, and carried on. The Rectory was extensively renovated, plus new construction. We formed a wonderful Search Committee and embarked on a discernment process.

Bad change: we purchased new hymnals, then changed the worship bulletin to include service music, making the hymnals irrelevant. Similarly, the successful drive to replace worn BCP volumes, with memorial dedication bookplates, was made unnecessary by "through-composed" worship bulletins.

Building the foundation for change requires common understanding of the purpose and desired outcome of the change. Trying something new has its place, but requires pre-work and engagement for success.