

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church - Southbridge
Mutual Ministry Review November 8, 2023
SUMMARY

PART I: We began with dinner conversation centering on three topics:

1. My most meaningful experience at Holy Trinity in 2023 was because . . .

- Clearing and replanting the garden in the front of the church: the collegiality, the creative energy, and reaffirming the message of beauty and vibrant life at the church
- Bishop's Visitation & Confirmation (just about unanimous): seeing the youth grow in faith and fellowship; redoing the chapel with their images to reflect and express their faith; coming together as a community of faith
- Energy of our children and youth, especially as reflected in their leadership in the liturgy on first Sundays and the Blessing of the Backpacks. They clearly understand that they are full members of the congregation, and we all understand that we are imperfect human beings worshipping and serving God together in love.
- Daughters of the King discernment and participation of new members
- The process of choosing and purchasing new green vestments – a sign of new life that affirmed our history
- Small group discussions and reading groups were occasions for learning and renewal
- The Transition Discernment Process – from the CAT to small groups, to parish meetings, to meeting with clergy serving in alternative models of ministry

2. If I could change one thing about Holy Trinity it would be because . . .

- We would have more members so we could sustain our mission & our building more effectively
- We would have a larger choir who sang more frequently – because we have so many people with musical talent in the congregation – even though we don't have the numbers or the time to realize this hope
- Unlimited funds so that we could maintain and utilize our building more effectively
(this was almost unanimous)
- Our building used by community members/groups throughout the week

3. My deepest hope for Holy Trinity is because . . .

- That we will be faithful stewards, following Jesus in the Way of Love
- That we continue to worship together into the future, and that we embrace together the path that God puts before us, whatever that may be and even if it is not a path we might personally choose [this was unanimous]
- That the path before us be clear and that we follow it together
- That we face the transition with grace, mercy, hope, and optimism
- That we be unencumbered by financial burdens so that we are free to grow into our mission
- That we make our decision with the future generation in mind, not just for ourselves

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PART II: We addressed the 3 topics that we had identified as key issues at our Vestry Retreat

1. Finances

- **What do we know?**
 - Preview of the 2024 Budget shows that our financial position has not changed significantly for several years. We are stable and healthy, even with a deficit budget
 - Our finances allow us to maintain where we are, but do not allow for growth.
- **What do we need to learn?**
 - We will know the 2024 pledge income at the end of the year and will have a better understanding of our projected financial position for 2024
 - There may be people with the skills and talents to do some work that could be cut from the budget. (We have taken this approach with hospitality, landscaping and groundskeeping, and VBS curriculum)
 - We know what we need to know
 - We don't know what we don't know
- **How can we learn what we need to know?**
 - Reevaluate at the end of 2023, based on 2023 income and pledges for 2024
 - Interview and invite wider participation by members of the congregation

2. The Building

- **What do we know?**
 - Conversations with Tri Valley about possible use by Meals on Wheels show that our accessibility and limited parking are hindrances to renting the building to other organizations
 - The expense of maintaining the building is a significant portion of our budget, even with cost-saving measures, & impedes our mission
- **What do we need to learn?**
 - Is there a market for selling the building to an organization that would fulfill our vision of the building? This might include a purchase that would allow us to lease back for worship and parish meetings
 - Have we exhausted the market for leasing space to other organizations?
 - Is there the possibility to partner with other churches in mission?
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- **How can we learn what we need to know?**
 - Interview local marketing specialists
 - Interview other nonprofits who have been able to lease space in order to meet the costs of maintenance

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3. Alternative Models for Ministry

- **What do we know?**
 - We need a new model that may allow for quarter-time priest and partnering with another congregation.
 - We learned a lot from our zoom meeting with other clergy serving in different models (Episcopal-Episcopal partnerships & merging; Episcopal-Lutheran partnerships and merging)
- **What do we need to learn?**
 - What would ministry with a quarter-time priest involve?
 - Are there other Episcopal congregations who might be open to sharing a priest?
 - How might we begin to explore a broader partnership with Bethlehem Lutheran (with whom we have a long relationship and currently share programs)?
- **How can we learn what we need to know?**
 - Consult with Canon Simpson about possible Episcopal partners and about how to initiate & structure a conversation with Bethlehem Lutheran.
 - Are there congregations across the border in the Diocese of Connecticut who might be open to sharing a priest?
 - Contact the Rev. Elliot Moss and the Rev. Vicki Ix to schedule a conversation with them and at least one of their Wardens or Vestry members about what quarter-time ministry involves.