

7/11/22

ST. ALBAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH OTM PARISH PROFILE

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

The engaged and vibrant community that is St. Alban's was evident in our response to Covid-19. Clergy, staff, choristers, and lay readers enabled a quick pivot to well-attended online services. Our WeCare volunteer network reached out to all parish households during the quarantine to maintain ties, support isolated parishioners, and facilitate pastoral interventions. Clergy used Zoom for regular community gatherings, online Bible study, Sacred Ground circles, adult formation seminars, youth formation, and vestry meetings. We maintained a balanced budget, sustained our financial support for the diocese, local and global missions, and raised \$2 million to fund capital improvements for safe re-opening. The loving commitment of this parish community powers us as we gradually resume in-person worship, spiritual formation activities and social gatherings, and begin planning new initiatives.

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

Liturgical worship and music are the heart of St. Alban's. We hold three English-speaking services in the "broad" Episcopal tradition, condensing to two in summer. Family services offer Rite II, and our early service features Rite I. Children's Chapel overlaps with one service, with children joining that service at the Peace. Worship is enriched by a strong musical tradition, maintained by an extraordinary Senior Choir, which is joined occasionally by a growing Children's Choir. Two clergy lead worship at weekly services in Spanish, with congregational singing led by professional musicians. Parishioners often reference clergy sermons, which typically blend hermeneutic excellence with pragmatic application to daily life and social witness. We continue to livestream one English and one Spanish service each Sunday.

3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Roles in worship include altar and flower guilds, choir, acolytes, readers, eucharistic ministers, ushers and greeters. As we emerge from pandemic, clergy have been inviting more youth and young adults to participate as readers, acolytes, and ushers. Each vestry member is assigned as liaison to one ministry, reporting annually. Pastoral care, property upkeep, outreach ministries, and parish social events seek broad-based parishioner involvement. Youth participate in feeding ministries and fill all lay roles during an annual Youth Sunday. Parishioners plan adult formation activities and serve as teachers for J2A and Youth formation. Associate Rector Emily Griffin, a nationally recognized leader in Godly Play, trains lay teachers for children's Sunday School. Clergy and greeters alert newcomers to ministries. A large number of parishioners take part in lay ministries, but we hope to recruit still more participants from all age groups.

7/11/22

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

Clergy and lay volunteers collaborate to care for parishioners. Social gatherings include Sunday coffee hours, parent gatherings during Sunday School, potluck dinners, and picnics. Associate Rector Jim Quigley oversees pastoral care, formation, and outreach. Clergy visit the sick and make biannual calls to those over age 80. The WeCare volunteer network organizes rides, meals, and calls for the sick and homebound. Trained Stephen Ministers offer long-term, one-to-one relationships during life challenges. Adult formation comprises Enquirer's classes, three Bible Study groups (one Spanish-speaking), Education for Ministry, covenant groups for women and men, Sacred Ground antiracism circles, and forums on a broad array of topics. Our Washington location, designated endowment funds and growing expertise in online programs provide quality wide-reaching forums to which parishioners respond avidly. The Race and Reconciliation forum during pandemic included Rev. Catherine Meeks and a recent forum on life in the Holy Land featured the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem and authors Yossi Halevi, Mohammed Daoudi and Stephanie Saldana.

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

Outreach and mission are a high priority. We routinely allocate 10% or more of our c. \$2 million operating budget to supporting various Christian social ministries, our diocese, and other Anglican institutions. Local outreach includes five feeding ministries, some with partners, health and wellness services, and emergency response drives. Before pandemic, proceeds from the on-site thrift shop contributed over \$200,000 annually to local charities through a competitive grant program. We provide significant financial support to two schools, one in South Sudan and one in Jordan. Our location on the Cathedral Close in the nation's capital, our Godly Play program for children, and our endowed funds earmarked for promoting spiritual growth and engagement with contemporary theology position St. Alban's to be a leader in Christian formation within the wider church and community. Emerging from pandemic, we aspire to revitalize hands-on outreach activities and bring greater strategic coherence to our programs. We also seek to create new outreach opportunities for children and to expand opportunities for parishioners to engage in witness in matters of racial and social justice.

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

The weekday luncheon program in partnership with Iona Senior Services is a venue for companionship and access to health and wellness services. Several Twelve Step programs meet in church buildings rent-free. Emergency drives address local needs and regular Mustard Seed collections respond to national and global catastrophes. Youth and adults greet homeless people during the Grate Patrol feeding ministry. The thrift shop is a valued resource for clothing, housewares, and books for seniors and others in need. Our prayer ministry extends to family and friends of parishioners. Areas for development include forming personal relationships with nonparishioners who use our buildings, such as participants in Iona lunches and Twelve Step meetings and engaging with our neighbors, including American University.

7/11/22

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

In 2019, our leaders challenged us to become “one parish worshipping in two languages.” St. Alban’s had long funded a small Latino congregation, but that group operated as a satellite service worshipping in a nearby school chapel. Spanish services are now held on Sundays in a dedicated space within our church, using a new portable altar designed for that purpose. All priests serve in rotation at Spanish eucharists, aided by real-time translation when needed (two of our four priests speak Spanish). Bilingual services are resuming quarterly, the most recent held in conjunction with the annual St. Alban’s Day picnic. Melding our communities is hard work but holds promise for our growth in number and spirit. Associate Rector Emily Griffin oversees this ministry, assisted by Associate Rector Yoimel González Hernández.

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

Our pre-pandemic January 2020 vestry retreat focused on taking the Way of Jesus into the larger community, targeting youth and young adults, Latino and African-American neighbors and communities plagued by poverty. Vestry and ministry groups have resumed this discussion. Interest grows in making our language, music and liturgy more inclusive while maintaining distinctive traditions. The vestry has recently focused on Rising Generations. Young adults seek attributes articulated by Bishop Curry. Future Church “looks and acts like Jesus” – focused on love, Spirit-driven, diverse, bearing witness for social justice, honoring tradition and contemplative practice, and promoting the dignity of all people.

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

St. Alban’s teaches generosity as a spiritual practice. A vestry member chairs annual stewardship appeals, assisted by a co-chair who takes the lead in the next year. Vestry members support these appeals, pledging money and devoting effort. Stewardship leaders attend annual conferences on current practices and changing patterns of giving. Pledges and plate collections typically cover about 75% of our operating costs, with larger gifts somewhat offsetting the trend towards fewer pledgers. Additional operating funds come from sustainable annual draws on our endowment, which currently exceeds \$5 million. “Mustard seed” offerings respond to emergency needs, such as supporting refugees.

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

The dominant tone at St. Alban’s is a spirit of harmony and connection that allows for respectful disagreement about issues without escalating to conflict. In this community of strong-minded individuals, we have had two anomalous conflicts in the last twenty years, both of which could be

7/11/22

categorized as arising from tension between custom and change. We have learned the importance of focusing early on the relationship aspects of emergent conflict. While avoiding conflict or focusing primarily on the contextual issues may be more comfortable in a church community, we recognize that facing it early can prevent escalation. This requires “people skills”, humility, honesty, willingness to seek help, and commitment to the parish’s best interests.

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?

Becoming “one parish worshipping in two languages” is an ambitious undertaking. There were practical and spiritual needs for change, but the needs and the vision proved difficult to convey, given abraded feelings on all sides. Latino parishioners felt the goal was imposed in a disrespectful way; a number left us. However, our clergy and lay leaders’ demonstrated commitment to Latino parishioners’ full participation in the life of St. Alban’s has won wide acceptance and we are progressing positively down the path toward greater integration. Active listening and patient, repeated articulation of the vision have proved essential. In the coming year, we intend to develop more opportunities to gather together as one parish.

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

Spirit-filled leader / Scripturally-grounded preacher / Forward-looking builder / Collaborative problem-solver.