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Parish Profile: Who We Are

I. Introduction

A. Parish Overview

Christ Church Exeter is one of the largest Episcopal churches in the diocese of New Hampshire, and draws its membership from a wide area of New Hampshire's Seacoast region. It is a very active church, and its members are deeply involved in many aspects of parish life, especially outreach. Our youth involvement is very strong, and we are proud of our Youth Theatre series that attracts both performers and audiences from across the region.

We are an inspired and empowered people looking for a leader who can continue to help us realize and actualize the gifts God has given to each of us.

We are blessed with a newly renovated worship space and an exceptional organ, one of the best in all of New England. Both are completely paid for.

We are currently seeking our 17th rector. After 12 very positive years, our former rector has been called to a new ministry. Sadly, we have bid him farewell, and have entrusted him to the care of a new congregation. And now with great excitement and optimism, we look forward to sharing ministry with our next rector.

Exeter is a great place to live. Our public schools are excellent, and we are also home to Phillips Exeter Academy and the Heronfield Academy. The Exeter area offers many cultural and recreational activities, and Exeter is within commuting distance of Boston.

B. Mission Statement

Christ Church strives to be a joyful, diverse community, anchored in Christ. This strengthens us to live in and minister to the world around us.

Christ Church provides opportunities for children, youth and adults of all ages to deepen their faith and their connection to God in their daily lives.

We do this by:

- Welcoming all people to worship
- Encouraging spiritual renewal and growth
- Offering small group activities that join our lives to one another and God
- Reaching out and sharing God's gifts with others

C. Brief History

In a nutshell: Christ Church was founded in 1865, and for almost a century we worshiped in the "old church" on Elliot Street in Exeter. In 1964 we moved to our current location on Pine Street. In 2006 our worship space was completely renovated, and our new organ was installed. We are currently seeking our 17th Rector.

A more complete history of Christ Church Exeter may be found on the Christ Church web site.

D. Vestry

Christ Church has a 9-member vestry and an Executive Committee consisting of the Rector, the Senior and Junior Wardens, the Clerk, and the Treasurer. Additional information about the vestry and Executive Committee may be found on the Christ Church web site.

E. Membership

Average Sunday attendance in 2011 was 224. Our membership comes from 30 communities in the Seacoast New Hampshire region, as well as several people from Massachusetts and Maine. Our membership mailing list includes approximately 500 e-mail and 200 paper mail recipients. Our geographic diversity is both a strength and a challenge.

F. Stewardship

For 2012, Christ Church has 182 pledge units. Our average pledge in 2012 is \$1891, which is up 9% from last year. A report on attendance and stewardship from our 2012 Annual Meeting can be seen on the Search Committee web site.

II. Hospitality

A. Welcoming

Christ Church actively promotes hospitality and newcomer assimilation through its Hospitality Team.

The mission of the Hospitality Team is to ensure every person who walks through the doors feels cared about, informed and included. Team members are dedicated to helping attendees to enter the church with a warm reception, and provide any assistance necessary for them to comfortably participate in the service. They especially seek to identify first-time visitors, provide them with a warm welcome and information about the church, and introduce them to the clergy and other church members. Each week our Team includes a member of the Vestry who joins in greeting people as they arrive.

B. Fellowship

Fellowship is an important element of the life at Christ Church.

Members of the Christ Church community enjoy gathering at various times for fun and fellowship. Whether it's as simple as Coffee Hour following each liturgy, the annual Parish Picnic, Greening of the Church at Christmas, Foyer dinners, or an outing to see the New Hampshire Fisher Cats baseball, there are numerous opportunities to meet other members of the church and share in some fun.

Fellowship is especially important to us because of our size, geographic and generational diversity, and two-service (8 and 10:30) nature of our congregation.

III. Worship and Pastoral Care

A. Services

Christ Church currently has Sunday services at 8:00 and 10:30, with an education hour for all ages at 9:15. From time to time as schedules and needs dictate, we have had other weekly opportunities for worship, including a contemporary, informal Sunday evening service, a mid-week healing eucharist, and morning or evening prayer. On Wednesday evenings in Lent we typically have a contemplative prayer service with Taize chant. On a monthly basis we celebrate the eucharist at RiverWoods and Langdon Place, two of the Exeter area's continuing care communities.

More information about Christ Church's worship schedule, including special liturgies, may be found on the Christ Church web site.

B. Pastoral Care

Under the leadership of the Priest Associate, the Pastoral Care Team is a group of parishioners who bring communion to the home bound, provide meals for parishioners who are recovering from illness or surgery, assist with funeral and memorial receptions, provide rides for homebound parishioners, and deliver our altar flowers to parishioners following the Sunday services. The dedication, involvement, and commitment of this team is noteworthy, and they are always ready and able to become involved when there is a need. Members of the Pastoral Care Team attend the monthly eucharists at RiverWoods and Langdon Place, which are mentioned above.

A more complete description of the Pastoral Care Team's activities can be found starting on page 7 of the 2012 Annual Report.

C. Music

1. Adult Choir

Music at Christ Church is diverse and inspiring. Teens and adults take part in our Parish Choir, which sings at the 10:30 service most Sundays, or the Festival Choir, which assembles for Christmas and Easter. Not your run-of-the-mill ensembles, our choirs sing spirituals, multicultural selections, traditional anthems, and contemporary music - sometimes in the same liturgy!

Volunteer instrumentalists from our congregation are often part of our liturgies, either as guest soloists or in small chamber ensembles. Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday are two popular times that we have featured small instrumental ensembles.

2. Youth and Junior Choirs

Children are invited to join the Junior Choir (grades 3 to 5) or Youth Choir (grades 6 and up), each rehearsing weekly and singing one Sunday per month.

3. Organ and Piano

The Liveley-Fulcher organ was built in 2006. It has 3 manuals, 43 ranks, and 2,653 pipes. It is one of the finest instruments in the state, and allows Christ Church to host many organ concerts.

We also have a beautiful Steinway Model L small concert grand piano, built in 1939.

4. The Mixer Concert Series

The Mixer Concert Series: In honor of long-time beloved members Jim and Phebe Mixer, the Mixer Music Fund provides rich musical performances annually for the parish and larger community to enjoy. The most recent in October, 2011, featured the Whiffenpoofs, the a cappella male singing group from Yale University. In addition to the marvelous concert, a Master Class was made available to youth from our Middle and High schools.

D. Healing Team

Our Healing Ministries Team, which was formed in 2003, offers the laying on of hands and anointing with oil each Sunday during communion at both liturgies. This Team consists of lay members who meet regularly for study and prayer, and to train new team members. More information about the

activities of the Healing Ministries Team can be found starting on page 17 of the 2012 Annual Report.

E. Other Worship Ministries

Christ Church members participate in great numbers in the many other worship ministries commonly found in Episcopal churches, including:

- Eucharistic Ministers, Readers, and Intercessors
- Ushers and Greeters
- Altar Guild (both men and women)
- Acolytes
- Children's Chapel leaders

More information about our Liturgy and Music can be found starting on page 15 of the 2012 Annual Report.

IV. Spiritual Formation

A. Youth Programs

1. Sunday School

Sunday School meets weekly from 9:15 - 10:15 during the school year. As well as learning about God, our kids are also engaged in special activities and mission work, including the Exeter Food Pantry and Operation Christmas Child.

Middle School students are invited to join our Confirmation program, designed to give them an opportunity to explore and deepen their faith as they prepare to make a mature commitment to Jesus. This age group also meets several times each month for food, fellowship, fun, and formation.

Senior High students have their own Youth Group, as well, and are invited to participate in a special Sunday morning program designed for this age group.

More information about our Sunday School programs can be found starting on page 12 of the 2012 Annual Report.

2. Children and Art

Art is very visible here, as well. For the past several years, 5th & 6th Grade Sunday School classes have painted murals that have been displayed both outside and inside the facilities.

3. WHAM

Our Middle School youth also participate in Sunday School, but have their own special program, as well. Wednesday Homework and Music (WHAM) is open to kids in 5th grade and above, and is a time to hang out with each other, participate in junior choir (optional), work on homework, and - of course - eat!

4. Youth Theatre

For the past five years, Christ Church has produced a fully-staged musical production by and for area teens. Aiming to provide a meaningful and spiritually-rewarding theatrical experience to both parishioners and community members, we seek to open the hearts and minds of those we serve through the use of dramatic arts.

Many of the performers, and most of the people who attend these productions, are not Christ Church members. More than just a youth program, Christ Church Youth Theatre is one of our most important outreach ministries to teens in the Exeter area.

A short video of scenes from our 2010 production can be seen on the Search Committee web site.

Other shows in this series include:

- *Godspell* (2007)
- *It's Cool in the Furnace* (2008)
- *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (2009)
- *Shout!* (2011)

Currently (February, 2012), we are in production with the musical *Trapeze*.

5 .Youth Retreats

Christ Church has a very active youth program for both middle school and high school aged kids, including youth retreats. Recent youth retreats include:

- Rumney Snow Camp (January, 2011)
- Calumet Lutheran Center (March, 2011)
- Merrowvista Center (October, 2011)

6. Youth Mission Trips

It is particularly noteworthy that the youth of Christ Church become involved in mission trips. (See below under *Mission Trips*).

More information about our Youth Ministry programs can be found starting on page 13 of the 2012 Annual Report.

B. Adult Education

1. Education for Ministry

The Education for Ministry (EfM) program is a four-year program offered as a distance-learning opportunity through the School of Theology of the University of the South. The basis of a theological education is taught one night per week by trained leaders. There has been a lively participation since 2006 and members seem to agree that the true blessing of the program is the spiritual growth derived from both the theological material and the community of love which develops.

2. Sunday Morning Forums

Adults gather on Sundays at 9:15 for the Adult Forum, held in Harris Hall. Led by the clergy and/or members of the congregation, we explore what it means to be a Christian in today's world.

3. Other Adult Formation Activities

- Occasionally groups from Christ Church have experienced the peace and joy of a retreat at the Society of Saint John the Evangelist monastery in Cambridge, MA.

- Quiet Days: During the seasons of Advent and Lent we frequently offer an experience for quiet reflection, led by clergy.
- Holy Land Pilgrimages: On several occasions, members of the congregation and clergy have had the life-changing experience of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. These have included programs on both the Old and New Testament holy sites, offered by St. George's College in Jerusalem.

C. Mission Trips

As current events dictate, members of Christ Church will come together to participate in a mission trip. We have helped with church renovations, assisted families following Hurricane Katrina, hosted 400 high school students from across the country to repair homes, and partnered with the Trinity Jubilee Center in Lewiston, Maine.

Examples of mission trips include:

- Phillipi, West Virginia, 2003 - a youth mission trip to help build a Community Center.
- Pottersville, New York, 2005 - a youth mission trip to help renovate a church building.
- Bayou La Batre, Alabama, January, 2006 - multi-generational mission trip to put up new sheetrock in a home that had been flooded by Hurricane Katrina, and raised enough money to buy new kitchen appliances for the family.
- Work Camp, Rockingham County, New Hampshire, 2006 - we hosted more than 400 youth and adults from several states to assist families in the Exeter area.
- An inter-generational mission to the Trinity Jubilee Center, Lewiston, ME, 2008, which serves Somali refugees.

A slide show of our mission trip to the Trinity Jubilee Center can be seen on the Search Committee web site.

V. Parish Outreach

Over the past decade there has been a major shift in Christ Church's involvement in outreach. Historically, we primarily helped other organizations through monetary donations. Over the past 10 years, we have seen a noteworthy increase in direct parishioner involvement in outreach. Many have said that their lives have been changed and enriched through this hands-on work. The following are some examples.

A. Ecumenical Holiday Program

Each fall we assist with Exeter's Thanksgiving and Christmas Basket programs. Whether providing turkey with all the trimmings for area families or purchasing gifts for kids to open on Christmas Day, those with very limited incomes are blessed with the bounty given to them by members of the parish.

B. Annual Rummage Sale

Since 1929, the Christ Church Rummage Sale has provided an alternative to shopping in retail stores for those with limited incomes. Harris House is filled, upstairs and down, with every type of item imaginable, from clothes and linens to books and kitchen supplies. All proceeds support community outreach programs. In October 2011, the Sale raised \$6,060!

More information about our 2011 Rummage Sale can be found starting on page 18 of the 2012 Annual Report.

C. Seacare

SeaCare provides assistance to those living in the New Hampshire Seacoast area who can't afford health insurance. Our parish supports this wonderful community service primarily through monetary donations and referrals, recognizing its vital contribution to the health and wellbeing of our low-income/uninsured area families.

D. Seacoast Family Promise

Seacoast Family Promise, part of the national Family Promise (formerly Interfaith Hospitality Network) organization, unites congregations to assist families experiencing homelessness due to a crisis. On a rotating schedule with other local churches, we turn the lower level of Harris House into a temporary home for 3 to 5 families for the duration of one week. Our members volunteer to provide meals, and to serve as evening and overnight hosts who welcome our guests and assist as needed.

More information about our participation in Seacoast Family Promise can be found starting on page 20 of the 2012 Annual Report.

E. Day of Service

On Sunday, October 3, 2010, Christ Church did something very unusual—the morning worship services were cancelled in order for parishioners to go out to serve in the area community, to “be in the presence of Jesus in a new way.” Building on a “long and sacred tradition” of outreach, this was the creation of a unique opportunity for all.

F. Feed My Lambs

Feed My Lambs is administered now by Christ Church, but was started about 16 years ago by members of the Congregational Church in Exeter. This program works very closely with the Exeter Welfare Department, the Exeter school system, and other churches in the area. Together we provide gas vouchers for doctor’s appointments and job interviews, food vouchers (to help purchase things that food stamps don’t cover) such as paper products and toiletries. “Back to School” supplies, new back packs, a new outfit to start school, and a gift card for a new pair of shoes are also given to needy families through this wonderful program.

In 2011, Christ Church helped 50 families for “Back to School”, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Altogether, there were 197 families serviced by Feed My Lambs.

G. Other Hunger Relief Programs

Christ Church participates in a number of other area food programs, including:

- Area Food Pantry (sponsored by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Michael's Church, Exeter)
- Crop Walk

H. Regular Use of our Building Space

Christ Church serves the community by donating use of our building space to several area non-profit organizations, including:

- Women, Infants & Children
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Boy Scouts
- We the People

Christ Church has chartered Boy Scout Troop 322 and Cub Scout Pack 322 for over 40 years. Scouts are active participants in church life and embody what over 41 million Scouts across the world affirm, and have affirmed for over a hundred years as part of the Scout Law: "a Scout is Reverent".

We the People is a free lecture and film series that invites you to engage on issues at the intersection of current events and religion. *We the People* is sponsored by the Congregational, Episcopal, and UU churches of Exeter, in cooperation with Phillips Exeter Academy.

VI. Administration

A. Current Staff & Organization

The ordained staff at Christ Church currently consists of an Interim Rector, Associate Rector, and part-time Priest Associate.

Lay staff includes the best Executive Assistant on the face of the earth, and part-time Organist and Interim Director of Music, Sexton, and Child Care Supervisor.

More information about current staff members can be found on the Christ Church web site.

B. Communications

1. Weekly e-mail from the Rector

Our parish database is able to send individual e-mails to all church members. One popular application of this has been the "Thursday E-Mail" from the Rector, which included an inspirational thought and a summary of events the following weekend.

2. Sunday Bulletins

Our Sunday Bulletins include the text of the entire liturgy (except for hymns), which makes it easy for new (and old!) people to fully participate in the service. Examples of bulletins for typical Sundays, as well as special services, can be found on the Search Committee web site.

3. Monthly Newsletter

Our monthly newsletter, The Anchor, is sent (mostly via e-mail) to church members. The current issue, as well as back issues, can be seen on the Search Committee web site.

4. Church Web Site and Facebook

Christ Church is firmly planted in the 21st century. Our Web Site welcomes visitors and keeps current members informed, and our Facebook Page is especially popular with younger members of the congregation.

5. Parish Directory

Our database also provides the ability to produce our own pictorial directory of church members. A team of volunteers is currently being formed to populate the database with family photos so that a new pictorial directory will be available in time for our new Rector.

C. Finance & Annual Budget

Financial reports for the past 3 years, together with a summary of the current year's budget, are contained in the Resource Documents section of this web site.

Our financial condition can be summarized:

- Strong balance sheet: cash and endowments
- One of the 5 Class Five (i.e., largest) congregations in New Hampshire
- Income: 2012 pledges per unit up 9% from 2011
- Paying full Fair Share to diocese
- Meeting diocesan compensation guidelines

VII. Buildings and Grounds

A. Our Buildings

We are blessed with a newly (2006) renovated worship space and an outstanding pipe organ. Our worship space is sought after for rental by other organizations.

Our sanctuary is beautified by the rich colors and design of our nine wall hangings, designed and created by local artist Kathie Krause Lannicelli. Stylized to fit the contemporary aspect of the building and to give the effect of stained glass windows, these fabric appliqué hangings lend color and movement to our worship space. They impart an artistic impression of our communion with God and each other and enhance our worship experience.

Our Chapel of St. Michael and All Angels, which is adorned with the altar from our (pre-1964) "old church," is a sacred space that is always open for prayer and meditation. It is used occasionally for smaller services, including the wedding of this webmaster.

Our worship space is also used periodically for musical performances by other community groups, enriching the many who attend.

B. Our Grounds

Special features of our grounds include a Labyrinth and a Memorial Garden.

We have a beautiful labyrinth on our grounds, created several years ago by one of our young parishioners as his Eagle Scout project. It is available for use by parishioners and visitors alike. We occasionally offer a “Labyrinth Walk,” an opportunity for healing prayer and meditation led by our Healing Team.

Our Memorial Garden not only provides a final resting place for the interment of ashes of many of our members, it offers a quiet place for loved ones to spend a few moments of reflection and prayer.

C. We're Frugal New Englanders

We are proud of the generosity of our members in donating time and effort to run and maintain our facilities. Examples include:

- tend to the gardens and landscaping
- mow the turf areas
- plow the parking areas
- adjust and maintain parts of the HVAC system
- print Sunday service bulletins

These are just a few of the ways parishioners pitch in to help. When a concern arises, we ask first if we can deal with it ourselves. We are frugal New Englanders when it comes to depending on paid professional contractors for support. For some members these commitments are offered as their annual pledge.