Office for Transition Ministry

Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio *(last updated May 10, 2024)*

St. Thomas, Battle Creek, MI, Western Michigan

16 E. Van Buren Street, Battle Creek, MI 49017, United States

Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | Receiving Names until 05/30/24.

Contact:
tlittle@edwm.org

Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA)
64

Number of Weekend Worship Services
1

Number of Weekday Worship Services
11

Number of Other per Month Worship Services

Current Annual Compensation
$70500

Cash Stipend

Housing / Rectory Detail
$24000

Utilities
$4700

SECA reimbursement
$5500

Compensation Available for New Position

Housing Available for
5

Pension Plan
We're in compliance with CPF requirements.

Healthcare Options
Full family

Dental
Yes

Housing Equity Allowance in budget

Annual Equity Amount

Vacation Weeks
4

Vacation Weeks Details

Continuing Education Weeks
2 (standard)

Continuing Education Weeks Details

Continuing Education Funding in budget
$501-$1000/year

Sabbatical Provision
Yes

Travel/Auto Account
No

Other Professional Account
No

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

This fall due to the actions of our Deacon Trish Harris, we have established a program called Laundry Love with a grant from the Bishop Whittemore Foundation. While our homeless shelters have added laundry facilities, they do not reach people who work but are marginal in income and cannot afford laundry service. The participation of parish volunteers as well as clients has dramatically increased as the program unfolds. We also have community volunteers. Deacon Trish has held 13 sessions with 460 guests and 1,579 loads. Parish members as well as community members have donated more funds to Laundry Love. Due to the COVID pandemic, we have also increased the technological capacity of our church and broadcast our services digitally. We recently discontinued our Community Breakfast program and joined with the SHARE Center for the homeless to work with them in offering daily breakfasts throughout the year.

How are your preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?

We work to maintain the essence of faith which is past, present, and future by following the words of Jesus, the cornerstone. Jesus said “Have you never read in the Scriptures, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.” (Matthew 23: 42, Psalm 118). We follow the answer of Peter to Jesus’s question “Who do you say I am?” and Peter replied, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” (Matthew 16:14-20). Our patron saint, St. Thomas declared “MY LORD AND MY GOD.” We follow our vision of being a light to the world as Jesus directed. We are renewing this by our involvement in Forward Movement’s Renewal Works. It is too easy to get distracted by budgets and business plans. Our vestry is working with the diocese to begin a strategic plan for a sustainable future, whether alone or in covenant with the wider Episcopal family in our area. We seek a rector who can share our vision and lead us there. We are flexible and collaborative and have faith that we will adapt to whatever comes along as we always have. We cannot forget our real purpose to live and spread the word of Christ.

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

skilled liturgist, strong preacher, pastoral care, leadership in church growth and evagelism

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

We follow the Anglican tradition and historically have been high-church. We have a monthly Evensong using 1662 BCP language and Coverdale psalter. Daily offices are prayed on weekdays, using Rites I and II. Holy Week and Easter follow the 1979 BCP. However, we are also ecumenical and partner with other churches for various activities. For example, we partner with downtown churches (First Baptist, First Methodist, St. Philip Roman Catholic, First Presbyterian, United Church of Christ) in a joint Good Friday noon service. Our colleagues in the ELCA (Trinity and St. Peters) and well as Resurrection Episcopal join us for Thanksgiving service and Mass on the Grass. During COVID we had outdoor services when weather permitted and often people walking downtown heard us and joined us. We did have a jail ministry that we had to stop during COVID but we have not picked back up on that yet.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

A high number of our members are involved in ministry such as St. Mary's Circle, the Altar Guild, the Preaching Circle, Ushers, Greeters, Pastoral Care and Eucharist Ministry. We have sub-deacons, crucifers, and acolytes. Our choir is an active ministry. Recently we designated one of our services per month to be a youth-directed one in which they do as many of the roles as are practical from running the AV equipment to being acolytes, lectors, and intercessors. We are a group that wants to "get our hands dirty" and do the work of ministry. It doesn't take much to get people to participate including the work of setting up the schedule for each Sunday.

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

We care for each other including an active Pastoral Care team. We pray for each other including intercessory prayer, daily prayer, and the prayer services of our Parish Contemplative. In Renewal Works, we developed and continue to promote a St. Thomas Rule of Life as well as having all meetings begin with prayer. This process has been great for this; reminding us to gather in community, to share, to pray, to serve, to explore scripture, and to rest. While it is jokingly called the "8 th Sacrament," Coffee Hour is also a key to our well-being.

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

We are a highly collaborative group. For years we had the only free breakfast program in Battle Creek but found it hard to maintain with declining membership. We kept it going during COVID times as a take-out system. We recently connected with the SHARE Center which is a place for the homeless to rest in the day time but also provides many services such as meals, getting an ID, having a mailing address, and other things they need to succeed. We also have a Holiday Basket program for Thanksgiving and Christmas. A School Backpack program is also one we participate in. We give out free bibles including children's level bibles.

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

We are active participants in diocesan conventions and activities. We do a lot of outreach to the wider geographic area as evidenced in the material in Question 6 above. We had an outreach program that paid for bus tickets, gas cards, and other helps for people in emergencies. This is not as active now because we connect with the SHARE Center which covers this. We collect things the Center needs like gloves and various hygiene products. We assisted the Sudanese Grace Episcopal Church in Grand Rapids with children's and teen level study bibles. We actively support PRIDE, MLK Breakfast, the NAACP, and Urban League as a church and also with individual memberships.

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

Who can be contacted about this project? The main one is explained in Question 1 on Laundry Love and Deacon Trish Harris can be contacted (tholcomb2011@hotmail.com). Our other active ministry in the last 5 years is Pastoral Care which has become much more involved under the leadership of Karen Keese (karkee4282@gmail.com). We increased our support of the SHARE Center in 2023. The Center helps the homeless by providing basic needs, removing barriers, and stabilizing income and housing. We invited the director Robert Elchert to a service to present information about the center as well as collecting needed items for him to take back. One of our members is active in a Friends of the SHARE Center group. Several are regular volunteers. St. Mary's Circle is making monetary donations.

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

First of all, we regard stewardship in the broadest sense – that is God's directive that we are to be stewards of the earth. Intercessory Prayer Form C has a wonderful phrase: "this fragile earth, our island home." We are conscious of that and although it is not a formal group, we strive to follow the Episcopal Creation Care principles. In terms of fundraising, we have an active Stewardship and Finance Committee that holds the annual stewardship campaign and we use the TENS program materials. Our members pledge generously but with decline, we have done occasional appeals to cover shortfalls. We have been using our endowments to supplement our operating budget for the past eleven years, but we hope to implement a strategy to discontinue this practice in the future. Our next rector must address this situation in collaboration with the vestry.

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

Over several decades, our experience with conflict includes members leaving in reaction to us hiring a female rector and then following that with an openly gay rector. It was hard to address but we just kept moving forward. Fortunately, we gained as many new members as left as they welcomed the forward looking and inclusive approach of St. Thomas. There are the usual divisions of opinion on how monies should be spent but usually resolved in the Vestry. An issue developed with a new font that caused some people to leave because of the non-transparent way in which it was done. In all of this, St. Thomas exhibits a remarkable consistent cohesiveness and labors on as the hymn lyric says: "Come labor on. Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain." We do not stand idle which may not always be the best way to solve a conflict but sometimes there is little alternative.

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?

Our last rector, Father Brian Coleman, certainly introduced many changes and innovations. The parish generally welcomed them. Trying to add more services like Evensong every Sunday did not work. The hope was that people who couldn't come early would come then. It did not work so we went back to one Evensong a month. What we learned is that you just try things and if they work, great, and if not go forward.

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Prior Incumbents

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Jack Van Hooser	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	1982-01	1993-01
Joy Rogers	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	1998-01	2007-01
Brian Coleman	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	2008-01	2022-01

Church School		Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School	Number of Students for Children School

Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School	Number of Students for Adults School

Day School	Number of Students for Day School	Number of Teachers for Day School	Number of Total Staff for Day School

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Worshipping Community Web site: www.stthomasbc.org

Media Links:

Online References:
> https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwQzowMLkf8XbYssMiUeXXg
> https://linktr.ee/stthomasbc

Languages Significantly Represented:
English

Provide Worship or Classes in:
English

References

Bishop: The Rt. Rev. Gladstone "Skip" Adams, Assisting Bishop	sadams@edwm.org 616-319-2006
Diocesan Transition Minister The Rev. Canon Tracie Little	tlittle@edwm.org 810-300-9177
Current Warden/Board Chair Franz Schirk	franz.schirk@gmail.com
Previous Warden/Board Chair Kathy Dingwall	kat.dingwall@outlook.com
Search Chair Liz Neumeyer and Kyle Lendel,	Liz Neumeyer, neumeyere@yahoo.com; Kyle Lendel, klendel@umich.edu
Parish/Institution The Rev. Rick Stravers	rstravers@gmail.com
Local Community Leader Robert Elchert	robert.elchert@sharecenterbc.org