

## St. Philip's, Durham Community Ministry Portfolio

### NARRATIVE (1,200 character limit including punctuation and spaces)

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

Serving a new family each year, Circle of Support has helped five families fully transition out of homelessness since 2012. Circle members say fellow parishioners are generous in responding to specific needs the families identify: "People went out of their way because we had established a mutually trusting relationship," one member said. Circle members report that serving in this ministry has had a lasting impact on their lives. They say they have awakened to privilege as a real injustice and have learned about the resilience of neighbors living on the margins. They also experience real joy alongside the families. That said, as successful as the ministry has been, parishioners are aware they must learn and adapt. The team recently has experienced the disappointment of having two families who did not achieve any meaningful change in their living situations. Both instances were the result of incomplete vetting by partner organizations. Team members are already exploring ways to mitigate the potential for such challenges as they look ahead to being able to resume their ministry post-pandemic.

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

Reflecting our commitment to being a church for all people through worship, love and action, pre-pandemic St. Philip's offered three styles of [Sunday services](#), all grounded in The Book of Common Prayer. With vergers assisting the rector in liturgical planning, we have been known to delight high church people with the smells and bells of a well-choreographed Easter Vigil in the sanctuary while also celebrating the Holy Eucharist in the parish hall using expansive language and inviting children to assist our deacon in setting the altar (9 a.m. service). Our 8 a.m. service is the most intimate, held in the side chapel and without music. The 11 a.m. service is the most traditional, featuring a beloved choir and preaching from the pulpit. Parishioners say they value challenging sermons, the music program (with a desire to pay the music director full-time and sustain a children's choir) and the spirit of welcome. For example, we recently replaced a pew with moveable chairs to improve accessibility. Some wonder how we might adapt our liturgy to be more hospitable to our unhoused neighbors and other downtown residents. During COVID, we have offered worship through live stream and Zoom.

**3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?**

With [dozens of active ministries](#) reflecting parishioners' commitments to such causes as justice, creation care and serving our downtown neighbors, St. Philip's has no shortage of opportunities to serve. Clergy and laity historically have used "Ministry Minute" presentations at worship,

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newsletter posts, ministry fairs and individual recruiting to invite broader participation in parish life. Parishioner interviews in a 2020 visioning process nevertheless revealed uneven engagement patterns, with newer and younger members less likely to participate outside Sunday morning. Parishioners credit a small group of dedicated lay leaders as “essential to the life and health of the congregation.” This calls us into deeper discernment on how we might rely less on rector-led ministry initiatives and lean more fully into the doctrine of a priesthood of all believers. How might we more effectively and sustainably identify, equip and empower laity to join and lead ministries? How might we structure intentional efforts to help parishioners connect their baptisms to their lay vocations? How might we continue to invite and welcome our neighbors fully into our shared life as St. Philipians?

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

St. Philip's offers a number of formational programs and caring ministries, and many parishioners told us in a survey that they have appreciated pastoral care from clergy. Children's ministry centers around [Catechesis of the Good Shepherd](#) (and also usually includes service opportunities and Vacation Bible School), and youth participate in the [J2A curriculum](#) that was created (and recently rewritten) at St. Philip's. Other offerings include Bible study, social/affinity groups and 50+ ministries combining fellowship with answering God's call to serve. New pandemic-safe offerings include online small groups, Zoom social hour and household excursions to [St. Philip's in the Trees](#). We rally in times of need, whether it be the Daughters of the King's perpetual cycle of prayer or the Helping Hands ministry delivering meals to parishioners experiencing major life events. Where can we improve? Parishioner feedback reveals a need for some focus on personal spirituality, and our clergy/parishioner ratios have reached levels that require us to begin exploring ways to equip lay people with skills for administering pastoral care.

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

Our Global Missions Committee maintains close relationships with the Bromley School and St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Liberia along with a couple of ministries serving the people of Haiti.

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Home to a vibrant contingent of West African immigrants, St. Philip's hosts the widely popular semiannual Liberian Dinner and Cultural Show to benefit Episcopal global missions. In our local community, St. Philip's is active in [Durham Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods](#) and [Durham Congregations In Action](#), having played a role in advocating for affordable housing in rapidly gentrifying downtown. We have an active [Racial Justice and Reconciliation](#) committee that is exploring questions about integrating its work across parish life. St. Philipians were instrumental in founding the ministries that would go on to become the [Latino Educational Achievement Partnership](#) and [Urban Ministries of Durham](#), and we remain ardent supporters of both. One might call St. Philip's an "influencer" parish in our diocese, supplying not only the Diocesan Chancellor, but also a long list of current and former members of the Diocesan Council and various standing and chartered diocesan committees.

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

When the pandemic began, we were no longer able to serve meals at Urban Ministries of Durham (UMD), a homeless shelter on our property. A group of parishioners quickly pivoted to launch the "Sandwich Brigade," a home-based ministry to address UMD's increased need for food. The leadership team has recruited about 75 volunteers from the parish, their neighborhoods and their friends. Each week, 25 brigadiers donate over 250 sandwiches (more than 10,000 total as of February 1, 2021), about 10 cases of water, hundreds of cookies and hundreds of pounds of fruit that are distributed in bagged lunches. We are aware that our neighbors have additional unmet needs the pandemic has exacerbated. The rector has a discretionary fund, but that is not enough money to meet all individual needs or address structural oppression. Over the winter, a number of tents have arisen on our campus, and our deacon has been pastoring to this emerging community and working with partner agencies to find safe shelter. Drug activity on the campus and nearby has been the subject of discussion over the past few years and will require ongoing discernment about how to respond.

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

St. Philip's Connect began several years ago to connect parishioners to ministries but has evolved into a fellowship ministry that helps parishioners develop relationships with one

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another. Twice per year, ministry leaders would host a dinner for newcomers who had been attending regularly but who had not yet become fully involved as well as parishioners who had become less involved or never fully connected. Ministry leaders initially envisioned every attendee would leave a dinner having found the perfect volunteer opportunity, thereby helping some of our smaller ministries grow. They learned that "success" was simply the opportunity to get to know one another better. Attendees reported appreciation for the opportunity to develop new relationships (a few requested ministry information, but most did not). This ministry paused during the pandemic. As we return to in-person activities, we believe it will be important for parishioners to build stronger, personal relationships with one another as part of recommitting to our common life. Search committee member Callie Woods is a ministry contact, [rectorsearch@stphilipsdurham.org](mailto:rectorsearch@stphilipsdurham.org).

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

In 2020, the vestry hired a consultant to help us gain clarity about our mission and values and focus our ministry strategies for greater impact. As a result, the vestry agreed to three internal priorities (strengthen formation, pastoral care and worship; steward our resources; and enhance communications) and three external priorities in response to our baptismal covenant and mutual relationships with neighbors (work toward racial justice; eradication of poverty; and K-12 educational equity in response to our baptismal covenant and mutual relationships with neighbors). We are engaged in several discernment processes that will also prepare us to participate in God's call:

- How to better steward our physical plant to align with mission ([Campus Study](#))
- How to respond to a bequest that includes a home, land and funds (St. Philip's in the Trees committee and vestry)
- Developing practices and goals following a fall 2020 vestry resolution to engage in intentional personal and communal racial justice and healing work (vestry)
- Anticipating a capital campaign to address deferred building maintenance (Buildings & Grounds committee)
- Imagining how new technology in the sanctuary might offer worship and gathering opportunities (clergy and Return to Worship committee)

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

Stewardship is a seasonal activity that supports the annual operating budget. Each fall we bring the community together over the course of two months and encourage giving time, talent and

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treasure by tying the practice of pledging to our shared life and community mission. However, this is an area where we are seeking to grow. As one lay leader wrote in a survey, he hopes in the next three years, "We will have developed a broader sense of stewardship as a personal expression of our faith and not giving to fund a budget and instilling this as a personal discipline in all our members." We aspire to a year-round stewardship approach that better integrates giving into all levels of formation. We recently received a large gift from a late parishioner, making it even more challenging to encourage giving as a spiritual practice. As of January 15, 2021, 164 parish households had pledged \$607,905 toward the 2021 budget (compared to \$760,530 from 254 households last year). In this difficult pandemic year, nearly all households fulfilled their 2020 pledges and many maintained or increased their 2021 pledge level (137 households or 84% of pledges made).

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

In recent listening sessions, survey responses and consultant interviews, the most frequently cited example of conflict is the decision to authorize same-sex blessings two rectors ago. Parishioners proudly describe this as St. Philip's at its best – deliberate, prayerful, respectful and loving. Yet it was not easy. Over about a year, multiple conversations drew together those who felt such a liturgy was necessary, those who felt it violated biblical teachings, and those who did not think it went far enough. Parishioners remember it as a time when we were able to hold and listen to opposing views and remain in communion with one another. St. Philip's has grown its commitment to our LGBTQIA+ members and the wider community with active participation in the N.C. Pride parade and an LGBT fellowship ministry. This example is notable for another reason: It was a very long time ago. Some parishioners have observed that this reflects the leadership style of the previous rector, who sought to prevent disagreement. With several significant decisions ahead, that are already kindling debate, we likely will benefit from coaching about how to live into our aspiration to be beloved community.

### **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?**

In many ways we have responded successfully to the pandemic - quickly transitioning to online worship; holding distanced, outdoor services when feasible; continuing to offer Baptisms and

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confirmation; and continuing to draw as many (or more!) children and youth to online formation. With talents from congregation members, our filming and sound have been excellent. The choir has adapted admirably to technology that allows them to sing individually and then be broadcast together during online services - a highlight of online worship for many parishioners. Homebound parishioners have expressed feeling more connected as a result of more online activities. Still, to a person, we would all say that online worship offers meager spiritual nourishment. Recognizing that we need to do more, we have recently added interactive weekday prayer to diversify options for worship and hopefully connect with more parishioners in a meaningful way. We are also learning that we have been less successful with adult formation and fellowship over the past 12 months. Experiments have been uneven, and some parishioners report feeling isolated, uninformed and disconnected.

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

The rector search committee listened carefully to our parish, hosting six listening sessions (including one for youth) and distributing a survey. More than 100 people shared the following ideas, organized by our commitment to worship, love and action:

#### Worship

- Insightful, invigorating and intellectual preaching
- Liturgist who is committed to inclusivity and diversity
- An approachable, authentic, loving and energetic pastor
- Commitment to engaging children and youth in our common life

#### Love

- Commitment to LGBTQIA+ equality
- A systematic, creative vision for spiritual formation
- A community builder who will help us reconnect and care for one another

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- A prayerful and discerning presence
- Experience leading through, rather than avoiding, conflict
- An active listener
- A collaborative administrator who delegates, not micromanages

### Action

- Demonstrated commitment to and experience with working for racial justice
- Experience empowering and equipping lay ministry
- A networker who can seed and sustain community partnerships
- Conversant in budgeting, endowments and congregational economic models
- A well-articulated theology of money and stewardship
- An entrepreneur who will help us imagine new ways of loving our neighbors

**Your worshipping community's website:** <http://stphilipsdurham.org/>