

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

At Good Shepherd, we integrate stewardship into our fall worship, starting with Time and Talent stewardship and then financial stewardship. Prior to our annual financial pledge campaign, we hold several Time and Talent Sundays. At CGS, we maintain an extensive list of opportunities for ministry, community involvement, support activities, and key events throughout the year. We are an active community with over 100 choices for the engagement of everyone's time and talent. This list offers opportunity for everyone to find something which they are comfortable supporting with the offer of their time and talent. The list is printed on an interest form made available at the beginning of each service and during the service, the congregation reviews it prayerfully and fills out the forms which are then included as part of the offertory. This list is then used throughout the year to solicit support of time and talent based on interest expressed. This information is also presented and reviewed with new parishioners as an easy way for them to see the variety of ways in which they can become involved in our community.

Traditional financial stewardship is held in the fall. We have testimonials from parishioners on what CGS means to them and their motivation for supporting our community. The submission of pledge cards is structured to be part of the service. Families are encouraged to come up together and submit a pledge. This integrates the concept of pledging straight into the service at a time of thanksgiving. It has the added benefit of encouraging family participation and conversation on what is being offered and why. We currently have 236 households pledging out of 542 active households (a 43% pledge rate).

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

Thankfully, we don't have too many situations of conflict at CGS. In part, this is a reflection of our effort to keep open, continuous, and healthy conversations a component of our everyday experience. However, an issue we are currently addressing is the decision regarding which outside organizations we support and to what extent, in terms of our commitment of tithing 10%.

The Front Door Agency was originally created here at CGS as the Nashua Pastoral Care Center. As it flourished and became more and more successful at supporting single women and their children, it moved out of their offices on our premises and eventually changed its name to The Front Door Agency. Every year, CGS has given The Front Door Agency a substantial donation.

In years when it was difficult to meet our 10% tithing commitment, and Community Action cuts needed to be made, they were made to other organizations but not The Front Door. The FDA is a part of us and we do want to continue supporting them, but

we have decided to consider new outreach ideas for the future. To come to this decision as a community, we had several visioning sessions to discuss this change.

One new idea is **CGS Cares**, which was initiated at a Community Action Forum in May. Parishioners have wanted new direct-service opportunities as well as the donation of funds for our Community Action. The idea is that we will have two or three different organizations for which CGS members could volunteer to help for a set period of time on that day. This would be similar to what our youth do on their mission trip, but we will be helping others in our own backyard. We hope to get this new endeavor underway in the fall of 2018.

3) 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?

Clearly, the largest change our community has faced is the retirement of our previous rector. He served over 31 years and thus, this was a watershed moment for our community and it was handled very well. As a result, we have a healthy community in transition that is moving forward and not just station keeping. Several things were done to facilitate this transition. First, the vestry and other key leaders knew the transition was coming, without a specific date in mind, and thus were not surprised and had time to prepare. This included study and focus on transition and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities among the staff and vestry. Once a date was set, we held many small group sessions with our rector. This enabled more personal one-on-one time for him to spend with every member of the congregation. We learned that allowing space, time, and conversation helped to minimize the natural trepidation that comes with major change. We also used these sessions to start the profile conversation with our parish even as our rector was saying goodbye. From these sessions, we collected feedback on what we do well, and our hopes for the future. In a seamless way, we have continued this conversation on many fronts in the past year.

To date, there have been no major steps of this process that have gone poorly. The transition has been smooth, a reflection of the health of the parish and effectiveness of the transition groundwork that was laid over two years ago. We look forward with optimism to continuing this positive momentum right on through to the final selection and installation of our next rector.

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

At CGS, we offer many opportunities to reach out to the community to offer pastoral care. Our youth of high-school age are passionate about their yearly mission trip which for a week, takes them to a community in need to help rebuild and repair homes for the elderly and underprivileged. This is a longstanding annual tradition. In recent years, they have traveled to Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Maine, and this year,

Connecticut, to meet with other like-minded teenagers from near and far to work together to help others and also further strengthen their faith.

Good Shepherd has strong roots in the local community. The Front Door Agency was created within our church as the Nashua Pastoral Care Center in 1987. Their mission is “to help single mothers as they transition from crisis to self-sufficiency by providing a hand-up opportunity to those at risk of homelessness.” This organization has evolved from modest beginnings to a major community organization. The Front Door Agency has offices and residential housing in the greater Nashua area.

At Christmas and Easter, we invite parishioners to choose a family for whom they can provide Christmas gifts and Easter baskets. A tree is set up in our auditorium with names of families from the Front Door Agency. The tradition has now expanded beyond our parish to local businesses and other Nashua organizations. The seed we planted in the 1980s has grown into a major non-profit in our community.

We also open our parish hall doors to the community every year on Thanksgiving Day to provide a meal for anyone who is looking for a good meal and a place of fellowship.

5) Describe your worshipping community’s involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region.

CGS has a strong ecumenical relationship with St. Patrick’s Catholic Church located next door, the Main Street United Methodist Church, Temple Beth Abraham, and First Church Nashua Congregational Church, to name a few.

We participate in the Interfaith Council with approximately six to eight churches in Greater Nashua meeting monthly at lunchtime to deal with local area issues, including increasing housing for the poor, and participating in the Nashua area CROP walk.

We also participate in the Episcopal Southern Convocation. This is a lively group of clergy and lay delegates from parishes throughout the southern part of New Hampshire. They meet the last Tuesday of each month from September to June to discuss issues that are coming up at the Diocesan convention.

The Diocesan Convention is also supported by CGS every year and in the past, we have sent a deputy to the General Convention. In addition, the Executive Director of the NH Council of Churches is an Episcopal priest, so he keeps CGS informed of current happenings.

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

In the past several years, CGS has started to explore ways we can branch more directly into the community beyond the traditional areas we have supported. We are having regular conversation within our community as to where and how we want to engage with new ministry and action. We have initiated “Coffee with the Clergy,” a regular opportunity for members in our broader community to meet our clergy and have casual conversation outside the church setting. We have started a Children’s Bell Ringing program with chimes, specifically targeted for younger children. We are also in our third year of hosting a week-long summer music camp open to all interested youth.

More recently, we have engaged in conversation regarding social justice. A group of parishioners read through “The New Jim Crow” as a book group. This has continued into engagement in social justice issues and community action.

Also this summer, we have been involved with the implementation of “Nashua Grows,” a new initiative to build and support a community garden in an unused field downtown in close proximity to the Church. Various groups are sponsoring the gardens, which are growing food for the Nashua Soup Kitchen and families from the Front Door Agency.

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

When it comes to our liturgical style, Good Shepherd is a fairly stable and consistent middle church but we are not without a sense of flavor and variety. The 8:00 service is not a quiet, sleepy, early-morning Episcopal service; it is a full Eucharist with music and attendance is robust. The 9:45 service with Church School is also very well attended. Church school takes place between those services and our children join the main service at the passing of the peace to sit with their families for the remainder of the Eucharist. Both the 8:00 and the 9:45 services tend to be our “main” services; the 11:15 service consistently tends to be our smaller and more contemplative service. Rite 2 from the Book of Common Prayer is our common staple at all services but we deliberately work throughout the program year to add regular flavor to our worship experience.

We held a month-long series exploring historical liturgy, using parts of 16th and 17th century liturgy. This past year, we reintroduced the Stations of the Cross with parishioners giving homilies at the stations. Children’s Eucharists are held throughout the year where our youth lead the service as lay ministers and the portable Altar is brought into the Nave and the children surround it on all sides during the consecration.

We reach out to our community in worship with an annual Blessing of the Animals in a local park. We participate in ecumenical services on Good Friday and Thanksgiving. This summer, we are experimenting with “Mass on the Grass with Brass.” The service is held on the front lawn of the church, located directly on Main Street, and our own Brass Ensemble leads the music for the worship. Another CGS tradition is our “Question and Answer” sermon. Parishioners write and anonymously submit questions on index cards right before the sermon. These are then collected, read aloud, and

discussed as the sermon for that day. Over the years, this has become a unique way for our community to question, cry, laugh, and share their concerns; even those that might not have a clear answer.

8) How do you practice incorporating others into ministry?

To encourage those who are not currently members of CGS, we have presence in the community by participating in activities such as the Holiday Stroll in downtown Nashua, the new community garden, Coffee with the Clergy, Ashes to Go and we open our doors to AA several times a week, to name a few.

For current parishioners, we use the Time and Talent sheet with explanations of each activity. We take time during Sunday services over two weekends to give parishioners thoughtful, prayerful time to consider what committees and activities they'd like to be involved in. We have a broad list which allows tremendous choice and variety. There is something for everyone.

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

Experts frequently point out that the best approach to maintaining one's health is a balance that considers habits, diet, exercise, and mental activity. At Good Shepherd, we seek to mirror that concept by approaching the health of our community using more than one modality. The common theme in all we do is open, honest dialog, often with a dash of humor, in an atmosphere of respect and welcome for all; regardless of where they are on their spiritual journey. This is demonstrated by holding "Question and Answer" sermons throughout the year, where prior to sermon time, the congregation is encouraged to write down questions they have about anything which are then read aloud and discussed in real time. We also encourage this same dialog as part of our adult education. Sunday Forums are held between services on topics of current interest that range from traditional discussion of gospel-based teaching, to community activity and the "hard" topics of racism and violence in our society.

Good Shepherd also holds a major spiritual renewal program called "Walking in the Light." This is a week-long program of spiritual growth, renewal, prayer, and intensive discussion. The program is offered every few years and has been highly successful. Renowned keynote teachers spend a week in residence holding programs in homes at mealtimes and nightly at church, culminating in a final celebration at the end of the week. Program activity and multiple times for engagements are constructed to deliberately allow as much opportunity as possible for broad, parish-wide participation, despite everyone's busy schedules. "Pop-in" opportunities are available, alongside occasions for more-extensive time commitments.

10) Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry which you recognized as one of success and fulfillment

For the first time in recent memory, CGS had a service of "Stations of the Cross" as one of our Good Friday offerings. The gathered congregation was invited to inhabit the space as they felt comfortable as we moved from station to station. Printed booklets were provided for those with mobility difficulties. Acolytes framed each station with their torches as ministers led the congregation in prayer. Four Lay Ministers (parishioners) were invited to give a prepared reflection at the station of their choosing with words about the intersection of the scripture with their life experience and our call to discipleship. The Choir also prepared musical offerings for several stations as they interspersed with the congregation, singing a capella. At the conclusion of the service everyone was invited into the chancel to sing "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord." Afterward, the congregation left in silence as they entered more fully into their triduum journey.

It was a very powerful, meaningful evening. These reflections brought the Stations of the Cross into modern focus.

11) How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?

This interim time has been an opportunity of reflection as the church considers how it has related and functioned in mission and ministry both internally and externally. Internally, the Lay Leadership has been invited more fully into their ministry of the baptized as they reflect on CGS' faith formation programs, worship, governance, and fellowship opportunities. The "Ministry Visioning Team," a cross-section of Lay ministers from various aspects of the church, has begun a series of conversations taking a "bird's eye" view of re-invigorating and re-imagining ministry in a 21st century context. In the 2018-19 program year, this team will follow up on several ideas for ministry which have been percolating in the community: outdoor summer worship and fellowship; Sunday evening worship; developing our Gingerbread Ministry as an opportunity for outreach and evangelism during the Downtown Holiday Stroll, and furthering conversation about the opportunity to have an Easter Vigil during Holy Week. Externally, CGS is preparing itself for the Church of the future by continuing our historic relationship with The Front Door Agency while simultaneously building relationship and outreach partnerships with other local groups as we support those in need in our neighborhood. The most prominent example of this is the Nashua Community Garden which partners with a cross-section of non-profits, city departments, businesses, and the church to help feed the families at The Front Door Agency's Norwell House, along with two refugee families re-settled to Nashua. This project was awarded funding through the Episcopal Church of NH Mission Resources grant due to

addressing the needs of the wider Nashua community while building strong partnerships with other organizations in the City.

We are not standing still during the interim transition; we are a strong, innovative parish moving forward.

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

Prayerful, spiritual, faithful, infectious enthusiasm, compassionate, leadership, humor, presence, positive attitude.