

## Part IX: Twelve Questions

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

Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021, was a beautiful Kent Island spring morning; it was also the first time since the onset of the COVID pandemic that the parish had the opportunity to worship together at Camp Wright, located on the Chesapeake Bay, owned by the Episcopal Diocese of Easton and directly adjacent to Christ Church. Everyone including our music ministry, altar guild, vestry, eucharistic ministers, parish administration and leadership were joyfully involved in planning for this long-awaited reunion. On that day, the outdoor benches were filled with families, friends, and visitors whose home churches were still closed. The overflowing crowd simply wanted to worship together on this glorious Easter morning. Easter colors of pink and purple were everywhere, crocus and daffodils dotted the worship area. A golden eagle flew past the congregation as our Rector began to welcome everyone. This truly was a moment when God was with us! The joy and love that we shared with each other that day made Easter 2021 truly unforgettable and began the recovery and growth of our parish that continues to this day.

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

At Christ Church Parish, Kent Island, you will find worship grounded in our congregation's four centuries of living God's mission. From Labor Day through Memorial Day, we celebrate two services: Rite I at 8am & Rite II at 10am.

The early service is generally quieter and more reverent, and for this reason, there are few families that attend at 8am. There is no choir, but musical accompaniment is provided on piano or organ. As one dedicated Rite I attendee describes it, "I not only enjoy the traditions and solemn nature of the early service, but also the hymns and organ."

The Rite II service at 10am includes our full choir, organ, and at times, guest musicians. The hymns at this service are generally traditional, but our choir blends that with more contemporary music for the offering and communion. Preschool and elementary school-aged children are offered Christian education during this service, returning to join their families at the Eucharist.

Given lower attendance during the summer months due to vacations, we pare down to one service, Rite II at 9:30. There is no formal choir, but they do make their presence heard as members of the congregation.

### **How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?**

Christ Church Parish Kent Island is a welcoming and friendly Episcopal church. Without reservation, all are welcome. We value Jesus' teaching of all-inclusive, non-judgmental love. As such, we have attracted new parishioners who find their place in the choir, our Soup Ministry, Backpack Meals for Children, church administration, or serving as ushers, greeters, LEM's and lectors.

Annual ministry fairs are held to highlight our opportunities to serve in all areas of the church. Our Soup Ministry attracts many non-members who enjoy the camaraderie and friendships that develop working in the kitchen, packing and selling to the public and delivering to various shut-ins and senior centers.

Although we make regular announcements and try to invite new members to participate in ministries, we need to focus more on gift discernment, as indicated in our parish survey, and use those to direct and develop more opportunities to practice our call to Lay Ministry.

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

In addition to Sunday services, we feed our souls during evening prayer, bible study and EFM. Our Youth Group meets on Sundays with a dedicated Leader to combine Christian Formation, fun, and a safe place to share their lives with their peers. Our Interim Rector regularly makes home visits and travels to hospitals to pray with the infirmed. Pastoral care is very important to our parish given that the majority of our members are seniors.

Our Parish Nurse holds monthly blood pressure tests and is available to parishioners who may need information or guidance in their health challenges.

To feed our bodies and promote fellowship, we hold monthly parish-family dinners during the school year. These dinners provide us an opportunity to know one another better in a casual setting. The parents spend time cleaning up while our Youth Group meets. We pack up our leftovers and share them with our neighbors at a local assisted living center.

The vestry budgeted monies to start a Stephen Ministry in response to the growing need for pastoral care. To date, we have not begun this effort but are open to this or other ideas to provide spiritual care for all.

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

CCPKI is engaged in a variety of missions aimed at caring for our community and the broader Queens Anne's County. Our most impactful mission is the "Backpack Weekend Meals for Kids", where we provide weekend food for children who are food insecure. Each week volunteers at CCPKI provide 170+ bags of food for children at three schools: Bayside Elementary, Kent Island Elementary and Sudlersville Middle School.

Christ Episcopal Church Day School (CECDS) began as an outreach program to the community and today is the oldest day-school program on Kent Island.

CCPKI is one of twenty-two organizational partners in Haven Ministries, a faith-based charitable organization that provides clothing, food, shelter, and support for the neediest in our community. Several parishioners serve as board members and officers of Haven Ministries, while many of our members prepare meals for their homeless shelter and stock the food pantries.

Christ Church is one of the largest congregations in the Easton Diocese. We have hosted our diocese annual convention and will again in 2025. Parishioners have also served on the Standing Committee.

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

At CCPKI we believe pastoral care is not just a responsibility of clergy but rather a parish-wide responsibility.

We provide a safe and cost-free venue for a variety of recovery groups. We also sponsor Boy Scout Troop 1631; each year on Scouting Sunday we draw our acolytes and lectors from their troop. We open our sanctuary at a minimal cost for funerals of members of the smaller, financially challenged churches in the community.

A prayer list in our Narthex includes those suffering within and outside of our parish community and our Interim Rector shares the Eucharist in a local nursing home in conjunction with other area clergy.

We have, in the past, held free community dinners, and would love to restart that ministry. They became so popular that we struggled to have enough volunteers to provide food to the growing numbers.

We have multiple parishioners who serve on boards or as volunteers to a number of church collaborations in the surrounding areas such as Haven Ministries, and "Sunday Suppers" (a group of church leaders and members who meet regularly to discuss the challenges of the racial issues within the area).

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

During the Covid pandemic, the vestry invested, and our church initiated a live-stream capability for Sunday services, including the music ministry. This allowed us to worship together, albeit not in person. In addition to that new capacity, leadership meetings, sessions for bible and religious studies (EFM), and for book groups were held via Zoom. This remote technology was successfully used to maintain a close connection to our worshipping community. So successful were these efforts during the pandemic, especially the live streaming of Sunday services, that new people, who found us on the web, joined our church. Comments from new members revealed that they were impressed by the church service, the rector's homilies, and the welcoming energy created by all. Unlike most other churches in the area, our choir membership grew after the pandemic due to the on-line engagement we had during Covid. Because of these successes we have continued to live stream our Sunday services where 15 to 20 people join us on-line each Sunday. We know that many more watch our services during the week. Contact Dottie Wilson, at [office@ccpki.org](mailto:office@ccpki.org).



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

Looking to the future, we envision creative ways to make our ministries more accessible. In addition to streaming services, we are making more meetings and study groups available via Zoom. Our EFM program, for instance, is a blended group of CCPKI parishioners and those from other Episcopal churches.

We have recently formed a committee to research and implement unique ways of providing Christian Formation to children. Sadly, families are so busy and Sunday mornings are no exception. We realize the need to incorporate the children into worship and develop programs that fit into a busy family's time commitments. One member of the committee has worked with children's theater groups and developed Sunday school programs. Our vision is to combine those into Christian based productions that encompass elementary and preschool children.

Approximately half of the members of CCPKI are over the age of 55. With the aging of our parish comes the need for additional pastoral care. We appreciate that caring for our own does not lay solely at the feet of our Rector. The average age of our parishioners is Certainly, Stephen Ministry and Licensed Eucharistic Visitors would provide additional band width to reach those at home, in the hospital or those unable to travel.

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

At CCPKI stewardship is defined broadly. As our mission statement reads, we strive to “Grow in God, to Serve in Christ and to Care in Christian Community.” We use our treasure, time, and talent to ensure vitality in our parish and to help our neighbors. The parish retired a \$1.5 million dollar mortgage on April 22, 2024. When we announced that the balance was at \$100,000.00 the donations poured in at a breathtaking rate. The recent, desperate need for a new roof was fully funded through rapid donations. When we ask, this parish responds.

Our Stewardship campaign is held annually and generally exceeds the goal. We are now asking for what we need as opposed to what we think we can get, and the parish responds. Giving is made easy through QR codes on the bulletins, online and text giving, in addition to the usual plate and mail offerings.

Unfortunately, we still deal with a deficit budget and need to draw from our endowments from time to time. However, as the mortgage is no longer a burden, we have asked our church family to redirect their unpaid mortgage pledges to the Operating Fund and Capital Improvements to better plan for future needs.

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

CCPKI faced a true crisis eleven years ago when it became apparent that the Rector at the time needed to be replaced. The parish went through a terrible time of division and faced a substantial fiscal crisis. We held one on one and small group meetings, led by our Senior Warden, to listen to those who were disaffected and angry, and develop a plan for recovery. The parish lost members, but healing began, and a new Priest in Charge brought unity and wholeness to the congregation. Out of this dark time, we learned the benefit of transparency in the work of the Vestry, Finance Committee, and other leadership. We find many ways in which authority can be delegated or shared.

Our recent parish survey indicates that our Conflict Management is strong, with 72% of respondents agreeing that conflict is managed through "mutual effort". Responses also indicate that 92% agree that "the leaders of our church show a genuine concern to know what people are thinking when decisions need to be made". Our Leadership believes that listening and openness are our strongest assets.

**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?**

CCPKI is blessed to have members who are active, able, and willing to commit time and treasure to the church and its ministries. Our members are generous with the gifts, yet we are stretched thin because of the church's financial commitments and the number and diversity of its ministries.

As families return to the church, we hired a Youth and Family Coordinator part time. While she did an excellent job with our Middle and High School aged youth and set up a Wiggle Worship Room for preschool children, we neglected the elementary aged group and provided only play and supervision in the Wiggle Room. We are reviewing this position to determine if it is a full-time position or can be supplemented with volunteers.

Our Interim Rector has begun a better habit of Pastoral Care, yet we have an aging population who needs more opportunities for inclusion in terms of care, and education. While we need to provide more to this population, we have a lack of volunteers, and a lack of leaders who have the time and energy to manage it. We have learned that we need more Leadership training and gift discernment to funnel volunteers into satisfying and uplifting work without overtaxing them.

**Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community. (Enter no more than four descriptions made up of one or two- words each. For example: administration, asset management, preaching, pastoral care)**

- Preaching
- Pastoral Care
- Strategic Leadership
- Change Management