

## **Narrative Questions for Profile**

*St. David's Episcopal Church, Bean Blossom, Indiana*

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

The parish of St. David's has recognized our outreach work as a priority in our community. When discussing the strengths of our community, parish members again and again mentioned our Farmers' Market ministry. We host a farmers' market weekly in the summer months and we offer the opportunity for community members who benefit from food stamps to participate as well. Someone needs only bring their food stamp card and swipe it on the machine we've trained parish members to operate in order to receive tokens they can spend at the vendor's booths. The vendors are reimbursed by St. David's outreach funds which are replenished by the State for the number of tokens dispersed. We enjoy getting to know more members of Brown County, creating a space for them to congregate and to provide a program for low income families to afford fresh, locally-grown food. The weekly opportunity to serve our community and share in live music and fellowship has proved a valuable ministry to both our parishioners and our neighbors in Christ.

### **2. Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship in your community.**

Services vary by church seasons. Rite II is our usual Sunday morning format. We rewrite prayers of the people weekly, allowing for variety in prayer content and format. Music is key to our worship practice. Our organist directs a small, 4-part choir, who rehearses and performs at least one anthem each week, and more at Easter and Christmas seasons. We sing the Gloria, Doxology, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. St. David's has a large pipe organ, a grand piano, and a harpsichord (the property of our organist, who is an organ/harpsichord PhD candidate at IU's Jacobs School of Music). St David's also offers special services we advertise, and to which we welcome the community.

We also offer a Wednesday evening prayer service where we also vary the format, sometimes using material from the New Zealand Book of Common Prayer.

During Advent Wednesday evening prayer, our Celtic Service highlights light into the darkness, with meditative music and lighted candles. This draws non-members from the wider community. Worshippers are invited to light more candles during prayers.

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

One of the many ways in which we engage the community is with our Pub Theology program. Monthly, we meet in a local restaurant to engage in topical theological discussions over food and drink. The congregation is invited to suggest topics for the monthly discussion. Community members are always welcome in the discussion and we've grown our parish through this ministry. Parish members have reported feeling intellectually and socially engaged by this program.

Our other special services (including Celtic at Advent, Christmas Eve, and Easter) attract visitors. Farmers' Market musicians, vendors, and food booth cooks extend St. David's ministry. Other programs that draw others and extend our ministry include our annual Blessing of the Animals, Biker's Breakfast, Blessing of the Bikes, and Christmas Eve and Easter services. Our well-attended Bean Blossom Music Series concerts draw musicians from the IU Jacobs School and from local and regional cities, along with many guests. Along with our playground and Children's' Garden, we have held Halloween parties and Easter Egg Hunts to attract local children and their families.

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

The heart of our Jesus Movement is in care and outreach for others as well as for ourselves.

In 2008 there was a flood in Brown County. Our worshipping community immediately responded with physical help, clothes and cleaning supplies. The bridge to get to and from the nearby Episcopal camp had washed out. Because of that event, we now offer the parish hall and church as a safe haven for the campers and staff in the event of any catastrophe.

We present Bean Blossom Music Series concerts several times a year. Honoring the diversity among us, these concerts have ranged from string quartets to folk groups, and are always followed by time for guests and musicians to socialize. We advertise these in our local communities, and enjoy the interchanges with attendees, who may worship differently or not at all, but who share much in common with us.

We continually collect food for the local Mother's Cupboard food pantry and St Vincent de Paul.

We offer hand-knitted prayer shawls for those who are ill or troubled.

At St. David's, these activities carry messages of love, support and sharing in the immensity of the Kingdom of God for both givers and receivers.

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

St. David's is an active participant in the wider church. A member has been a deputy to the past two General Conventions and is on the Provence V Executive Board. We have representatives on UTO and Global Missions. Waycross, our nearby Episcopal camp and conference center, provides opportunities to work and worship with youth. We participate on boards within our local community. These include Access, the only public transportation in this community, and the Backpack Program, where we join other area churches in sending food home with children for the weekends. In summer we hold a weekly farmers' market in the church parking lot, with local vendors providing produce and food. A café is part of the market, and guests are invited to buy food and soft drinks to enjoy at our picnic tables or indoors in our Gathering Place. St David's donates noodles to St. Vincent de Paul's food pantry. We are known as the "Peanut Butter Church," as we collect peanut butter for the local food bank. Mother's Cupboard, the only daily community kitchen, was started by a member of our church. We partner with the Methodists for Shrove Tuesday pancakes and encourage end-of-life community conversations.

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

There are four Lay Eucharist Visitor diocesan-trained individuals in the congregation, who take communion to the homebound members of our church.

Our space is free to use by anyone in our community. Our Gathering Place has been used for Halloween, Christmas, and Easter parties to which we invite our wider community. Anyone may be placed on our weekly prayer list. Four times a year, in rotation with other county churches, we lead Sunday worship of prayers and hymns for residents, family members, and staff of our local Brown County Health and Living Community senior-care facility. Our Discretionary Fund is available to anyone in need.

**7. Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past 5 years. Who can be contacted about this project?**

A Children's Garden was designed and implemented in 2017. The idea arose from seeing the Farmers' Market vendors and guests needing a place nearby for their children. We fenced in a 33-by-36-foot area immediately behind the parish hall, which is 20 yards from the church. We planted lovely flower beds and vegetable gardens around a play area. On the back fence are bird and butterfly houses where children are able to see nature's wonders first hand. Children also take part in planting vegetables and flowers, and watch the progress of these plants, learning about pollinators as well. Last summer, they planted catnip, then harvested it, filled toys with it, and sold the toys at the Farmers' Market.

A few yards behind the garden, at the edge of the woods, an Eagle Scout project is complete. A mulched area, which accommodates two benches and a tree-shaped receptacle for books, provides a place where children and parents can sit in the beauty of the woodlands and read or simply be together.

The person to contact for more information is Donna Niednagel.

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

We cannot know what the church of the future will be like, but we believe St. David's journey in faith is steadily moving us in that direction. Our Diocese is led by a young female Bishop of color, making a statement of inclusivity and diversity that is lived, rather than simply spoken. At St. David's, incorporating people from many religious backgrounds and no previous faith home, is the norm. We know from experience that being the Church does not protect us from storms and traumas in an often-chaotic world. But the guidance of strong lay leadership, our caring Bishop Jennifer, and a professional crisis consultant have all enabled us to move through critical times. We're learning along the way how to face inevitable conflicts and ongoing change within a community that can provide a counter-cultural model desperately needed in our social and political climate. As a small congregation, which has faced times of uncertainty in sustaining regular ordained leadership, we take seriously our role as ministers, and continue to worship, support each other, and reach out in ministry throughout change and transitions.

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

St. David's has always experienced our worshipping community as generous, balancing parish needs with our desire to be broadly involved in mission outreach. Our finance committee works with the vestry and congregation to craft a yearly budget that supports clergy and staff, buildings and grounds, diocesan apportionment, and our priorities. We received The Episcopal Network for Stewardship award at the Anaheim General Convention for our \$675,000 capital campaign that donated the first 10% to mission outreach. We added flexible space in the church building and had enough money left over to remodel our separate meeting space and offices and satisfied our construction loan over five years. We developed a narrative 2017 "dream budget," and discussed it individually, and in person with all members. We received increased pledges that could not fund all our dreams, and we seriously began looking at sustainability. We continued the narrative budget for 2018, searching for a half-time priest after a hopeful look at our sustainability. We pray together weekly for our work here and in the community, and we know that after services, we are the Church that leaves to do and be the gospel.

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

Just after the 2016 presidential election, St David’s was defaced with hate slogans. We left the writings visible on the two church walls until we could plan a service of healing, and, in our priest’s words, express “radical neighbor love.” In the meantime, there was an outpouring of support from all over the world. When we held a service to expunge the writings, 200+ people came to join us at St. David’s for scrubbing, worship, and chili, all under the banner of overcoming hate with love -- replacing darkness with light.

A second shock was learning in March 2017 that our organist/music director was responsible for the graffiti. At the suggestion of our bishop and vestry, we hired a consultant to help us deal more thoroughly with these issues. Vestry and congregation did grief work and trained to address conflict.

Our congregation acknowledges our initial rush to judgment—we believed a community member who disliked our openness to diversity created the graffiti. This was a lesson for us. We are emerging on the other side, and putting our training into practice. We feel a new level of compassion for our young former organist, for each other, and for those with whom we disagree.

**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?**

St. David’s last decade at the intersection of two highways in “Beautiful Downtown Bean Blossom” has been one of planned change tempered by unexpected events and departures. Two changes that went well were our switch from a mission congregation to a parish in 2009, and the creation of St. David’s Chapel Garden in 2016 for outdoor worship and interment of cremains. Both changes required assessing needs and desires and the leadership to implement the changes. Two changes that were surprising and painful were the vandalism of the church exterior with anti-LGBTQ and pro-Nazi slurs just after the 2016 election and the unexpected departure of our most recent priest-in-charge. In both surprises, we learned we often require God’s help through those who are not members of St. David’s, learned to be thankful when things go well or poorly, learned to expect change, and learned that we can heal through a process of sharing our stories and searching together for truth with a helpful guide. Leadership learned to have a plan to move and communicate quickly when the unexpected happens.

**12. Please provide four (4) individual words describing the gifts and skill essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.**

**Integrity** -- an integrated, whole person, who possesses honesty in communication and relationships, including a sense of humor, leading to trust in the parish and diocesan communities.

**Spiritual** – Cultivates a spiritual life of prayer, worship, spiritual attentiveness, and acts of caring and justice, all of which inform the church. This includes self-care and appropriate personal boundaries.

**Pastoral** -- Develops appropriate pastoral care for the church community, including regular visits to the homebound and sick, and training laity in pastoral care.

**Formation** – By preaching, teaching, liturgy, and servant leadership, clergy demonstrates the ability to communicate and apply the gospel of Jesus to needs and realities of the day; makes available the Episcopal Church’s heritage of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience; and invites people along on a spiritual journey.