

## Church Profile Questions

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

A moments we recognize as successful and fulfilling was the church's official farewell celebration for Reverend Canon Kortright Davis and Reverend Kelly Brown Douglas. The farewell was a bifurcated event in which the youth and adults hosted separate activities.

The youth began the celebration by organizing their own Sunday service and luncheon for Canon Davis and Rev. Douglas. They conducted all parts of their service—providing ushers, element bearers, lay readers and the sermon. The group invited one of their former youth seminarians to offer the Eucharist. Following the service, the youth organized, provided and served a full luncheon. Their program continued during lunch showing gratitude to Canon Davis and Rev. Douglas with poems, musicals selections and testimonials.

The adults followed up with a two-day weekend event including a Saturday luncheon and a special Sunday service. The Vestry and congregation invited the families of Canon Davis and Rev. Douglas, as well as Diocesan officials, Caribbean dignitaries, and colleagues to share in our farewell festivities. The celebration was successful because it involved the participation and effort of most all Holy Comforter members, both the youth and adults, transforming a potentially sad time into a memorable and joyous event.

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

We celebrate the Holy Eucharist, Rite II, at both the 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services. There is no music at the 8:00 a.m. service. During the 10:30 a.m. service, our choir and organist lead us in Anglican hymns as well as African American music from *Lift Every Voice and Sing II* and the *African American Heritage Hymnal*. Occasionally, steel drums, other instruments, and liturgical dancers are used. Members, including teens and children, are used as readers at some services. Our Lay Eucharistic Ministers and acolytes assist the priest during both services.

During our liturgical calendar year, we have special celebrations and activities that may become part of the normal service—Holy Week, Christmas Eve, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year's Eve, Mother's/Father's Day, Education Sunday, Youth Sunday, and healing services.

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

Visitors are welcomed upon arrival and invited to sign our visitors' book. They are invited to join in fellowship at Coffee Hour after service. On many Sundays, Holy Comforter's Coffee Hour is a full meal. Visitors, therefore, have a good deal of time to interact with our members. This allows time for new members to be approached and encouraged to consider becoming members and provide their time and talents in one of the church's ministries.

The congregation is divided into cell groups with a leader. The cells are responsible for carrying elements to the altar, preparing Coffee Hour for their designated Sundays, communicating information to their members, and assisting with the wellbeing of their members.

The church provides Sunday bulletins for the services and mails copies to the sick and shut-in. We have a church website and a Listserv to disseminate information to members. The church also opens the facility to other organizations for meetings and activities.

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

The cells are responsible for maintaining comity among the members, sustaining contact with the sick and shut-in, and sponsoring the Coffee Hour after the main Sunday service. Telephone prayer sessions, arranged separately for men and women, bring members together early in the morning on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. A group of adults engage in bible study between the Sunday services. Although members acknowledge that their main activities are spiritual, they also get together for social activities like the dinner dance, the crab feast, and the multi-cultural fiesta. Members also support other activities like movie nights, attending the theater, and open discussion of critical current events which help to keep our community together. In addition, we help mobility-challenged members obtain public transportation through Metro Access, and the church has a lift access for those who need it. Most of all, the congregation acknowledges the accomplishments of every member.

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

Our members are involved with several organizations of the wider Church. We contribute financially to various diocesan organizations, like the United Thank Offering (UTO). Our members also attend the prayer breakfast of the ECW, their annual meeting and Flower Mart. The church sponsors a chapter of Daughters of the King, and these members also participate in the activities of the national association. The men of the church have a vibrant fellowship group which sponsors activities in the geographic community aimed at specific groups. Youth members of the congregation participate in events sponsored by the diocese, especially the retreats. Our members also contribute to those in need through the Samaritan Ministry and through their generous response whenever disaster strikes. Our church provides the venue for many Caribbean countries to celebrate their independence and/or special occasions.

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

Our members respond positively by providing financial aid, clothes, books and time to those beyond our worshipping community. We also collaborate with others to provide disaster relief. We created The Haiti Project and adopted a Haitian child in response to the earthquake disaster. Closer to home, our members contribute to help families in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons. We provide sandwiches to the homeless through the Slice of Life program. The Men's Fellowship group also provides clothes

and food, sometimes spiritual assistance, to men in homeless shelters. We send care packages to our college students, and we support groups, especially those working to uplift our young people.

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

During the past five years, our church has initiated two Prayer Group Telephone Conference Lines which promote member prayer discipline and fellowship in addition to Sunday worship. The Men's Fellowship started the first prayer line on Wednesday mornings. A short time later, the women of the church felt that it was a great idea and began the second prayer line on Tuesday mornings. The prayer meetings last for approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Persons wishing to join a prayer line dial in for prayer. The leader starts with one or more prayers. Members are then free to read psalms or passages from the scriptures. They offer prayers for those with special needs, as well as prayers of thanksgiving. The meetings end with a prayer. The contact persons for the prayer lines are John Anderson and Heather Benjamin-Alexis.

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

We are preparing ourselves to be the church of the future by expanding our outreach services to the community and by becoming more relevant and welcoming to all. We are planning to augment the Music Ministry with a Junior Choir and Liturgical Dancing. We are bringing members into new roles in the church. We continue to plan activities with the youth and to reconnect with the Young Adults who have gone to college. We are developing our Bishop John T. Walker Center National Learning Center (Walker Center) marketing strategy. The Walker Center is a new, modern, state-of-the art, telecommunications-equipped conference and meeting facility that helps to promote the church's educational and outreach mission. In addition to conferences and meetings, it is commercially available for hosting a variety of events, including wedding, birthday, and graduation receptions. We are using social media technologies such as Listserve and audio visual capabilities to communicate with the congregation and the community. We are enhancing our website to share programs and events for our church family and the community, as well as to improve the donation efforts of the church.

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

We incorporate stewardship into our yearlong ministry to encourage members to give their time, talent and treasure. We have a Fair Share Program in which a baseline amount for individual giving is established. Once a year we ask members to make a commitment to the amount they will give by filling out and returning a Fair Share form. Our Music Ministry utilizes the talent of members and non-members in our worship services. Musicians, singers, and dancers help to enliven our worship services. Our Education committee works with the youth and provides scholarships to college bound students and other educational activities. We also encourage members to share some of their treasure via the UTO, soul food luncheon, Slice of Life, fundraisers and outreach. We collect dry food items for our food basket and package and deliver them to homeless shelters.

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

Our worshipping community has been fortunate not to have experienced major conflicts within the church. However, differences of opinion arise from time to time. We discuss minor issues as they arise within small groups and generally resolve them ourselves. We take more serious issues to the Priest or the Vestry for resolution. When issues are personal and affect a single individual, they are addressed discreetly. Our Annual General Meeting has always provided a forum for open discussion. It is a time when members of the congregation feel free to bring before the full body any issue that affects the church. Those issues that can be resolved during the meeting by explanation or clarification are immediately resolved. There is follow-up on other issues as necessary.

**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?**

Change in our church has been led by the Rector, Vestry, and individual members of the congregation. Changes that have gone well include the establishment of a Listserve to facilitate communication, moving our annual Multicultural Fiesta from off the premises to our own facility, installing a lift for access for the disabled, and the recent increase of lay ministers.

Changes that have proved challenging include modification of the Sunday Coffee Hour procedures and the addition of the Walker Center, which we continue to promote. Our transition period was initially very difficult because of uncertainty regarding the future of the church and lack of information about the search process. However, most issues regarding the transition so far have been resolved with better communication.

We understand that change in church leadership is inevitable and can be difficult. We have learned that we need greater member participation in all processes and that we need to constantly monitor and improve our means of communication. We have also learned that our congregation must be kept informed of changes and made to feel that it has a valued and active role in effecting these changes.

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

Words that describe the essential gifts and skills of the future leaders of our worshipping community are:

Spiritual  
Visionary  
Inspiring preacher  
Good Communicator  
Understanding  
Patient  
Culturally sensitive  
Compassionate

Warm and approachable  
Flexible  
Vibrant  
Youth-oriented  
Musically inclined  
Business-minded  
Community-minded  
Socially aware