

THE RIVER PARISHES PROFILE

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

The River Parishes care for the well-being of our worshipping community by listening carefully to the varied voices within our congregations and paying close attention to, and responding to, any of their concerns. We encourage many opportunities for fellowship including monthly community dinners and coffee hours following services. Occasionally, we hold work bees which help to bring parishioners together to accomplish necessary and useful tasks which benefit not only the church itself, but also provide assistance for needy individuals. During Lent, we gather for soup suppers and book discussions. We enjoy weekly emails informing us about the Sunday services and many upcoming events. There is a walking group of church members that has “picked up” and helped many community members. The walkers have recruited people who help with our monthly dinners and now attend services. We aim to help people by meeting them where they are. Additionally, we offer lay Eucharistic ministry and we have expanded our altar guild, and we create and faithfully participate in prayer chains together.

If you were to identify the gifts/skills you need in leadership as you move into the future, which words would you use to best describe these gifts?

We seek a faithful, loving, approachable, and sensitive counselor who wishes to serve, is gentle, patient, community-minded, charismatic, friendly, and actively engaged. We need a vibrant, visionary, healing guide with a sense of humor who is respectful of vestry. We are looking for someone with energy and imagination who can find ways of breathing new life into our aging congregations.

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

The River Parishes engage in pastoral care for those beyond our worshipping community in many ways. We knit or crochet new pocket prayers and prayer shawls to be given to anyone in need of God’s healing grace. We encourage friendship and fellowship by offering free Community Dinners and delivering them to members and non-members alike, we contribute to Cape Vincent Lions Christmas gift drive, food pantry and the NNYCF fund. We support The Victim’s Assistance Center and Hospice. We have lay Eucharistic ministers who do home visits. We deliver baskets of cheer to shut-ins and the elderly. We hold fundraising dinners for foreign language students’ trips abroad, and members of the congregation visit people at home as well. Food Sense planning and distribution help local people stretch their food dollars, and The Summer Concert Series brings people together.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

We incorporate others through invitation, conversation, education, and by example. The Food Sense Program provides low-cost options for healthy meal planning inviting all members of the larger community. Volunteers deliver the food from Clayton to Cape Vincent and Alexandria Bay. Additional ministries include hand-made comfort blankets, Narcan training, and the summer music series (funded by a generous parishioner.) We provide transportation to services. We also collaborate with Sisters of St. Joseph and provide money for housing. We donate to the Victims' Assistance Center and Hospice providing components of their security systems. Members of neighboring churches help us prepare, serve and distribute free community dinners. Ecumenical services and Hymn sings invite others to church. We contribute to the Lions' Christmas fund.

We hire local people for repairs, secretarial services, upkeep and maintenance. We helped people get their Covid Vaccines. The River Parishes host Baccalaureate Services in conjunction with local school districts.

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

For the past two years, we have hosted services on the Cape Vincent Village Green during the town's most celebrated weekend, French Festival. All denominations are welcome, and the services have been inclusive and wellreceived. The first year, the collection was donated to a local family who just lost their home to fire. We work extremely hard to welcome anyone and everyone and we try our best to make newcomers feel that they truly have found a spiritual home at the River Parishes. The music ministry inspires all of us to join in celebrating the love of God through the glory of the sacred sound.

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

Each of the individual congregations is really a family. To one church in The River Parishes, the other church families are like favorite cousins. It's important to note that all three churches are part of a river community. At St. John's, Christ Church and Church of St Lawrence, we practice Rite 2 from The Book of Common Prayer. We sing from The 1982 Hymnal, Lift Every Voice and Sing, and Wonder, Love, and Praise. We offer tincture and drinking from the chalice during Eucharist, and we conduct morning and evening prayer services. Music is an important part of our services. We also offer hybrid video services and those who attend online state that they truly appreciate that we make it a point to share the Peace with online participants.

Describe your worshipping communities' involvement in either the wider Church or geographical community.

The River Parishes participate in Diocesan events and training. We host, coordinate, and attend Ecumenical services. At St. John's, our warden, Colleen, is our direct connection to the Cape Vincent food pantry, which we support. We contribute to The Episcopal Relief Fund. Our Food Sense Program, community dinners, music series, and involvement with The Lions Club and the Northern New York Community Foundation are important aspects of our involvement with our larger community.

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

Christ Church initiated a Food Sense program in partnership with the Central New York Food Bank to provide low-cost nutritious food monthly to anyone along the river. They have created separate funding to help those unable to pay.

Sharon Campbell is the coordinator.

Church of the St. Lawrence parishioners enjoy a concert series that is part of their Sunday services and blends beautifully into their liturgy. A wide variety of talented musicians and instruments is featured. The program is funded by a parishioner.

Although it is changing next month, Comfort Food and Conversation, a monthly free dinner, is the best thing St. John's has initiated recently. Kathy Pierce directed this ministry.

How are you preparing yourself for the Church of the future?

Our churches offer ongoing video services. We are growing our lay ministry and inviting the public in our doors and on our grounds, as well taking our service to Village Green. We endeavor to meet the people where they are. As

Episcopalians, we work to spread the word that "All are welcome here."

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

We are working hard to feed the people. Our lives are shaped and connected by service. Currently at Christ Church, we provide Food Sense, coffee hour, and monthly dinners to build fellowship and community. St. John's is blessed with the generous pledges and financial support of members and a substantial endowment. These resources, carefully tended by investment representatives and vestries, provide freedom and flexibility to meet needs, support our priest and engage in outreach (which has become central to our parish family.) This includes monthly Food Sense buys. Free monthly dinners have greatly improved our ability to help. We support the Northern New York Community Foundation and The Victims' Assistance Center. The Church of St. Lawrence provides a fantastic music ministry, transportation, and coffee hours. The River Parishes practice good stewardship in maintaining our

beautiful buildings and communities. Several major projects to protect the stained glass, roof, furnace, painting, door restoration and walkways have been done in recent years. Formal stewardship campaigns encourage regular giving of time and treasure.

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

Conflict is not alien to us, but we have experienced little in the last five years. We lost some attendance recently due to the interpretation of the priest's sermons as being political, but vestry and parishioners continue to have great relationships with the people who have left. It is a goal to bring people back. The churches of the River Parishes work well together. Communities along the river meld together. A strong and compassionate spiritual leader who will love, teach, and guide our way is crucial to our well-being and our future.

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?

Our congregations strive to listen and respect. We have learned to remain firm in a loving way when priests or members have urged actions or policies that do not fit with our loving and inclusive mission. The Pride Welcome Flag ruffled some feathers in church and outside the walls. Vestry voted for reinforcing the Episcopal invitation "All are welcome here." The strife eventually dissipated. Changing the peace in the service to a peace sign in Cape Vincent works for our elderly congregation rather than shaking hands. This came about during Covid and we kept it. We have learned that conviction is important. We must stay true to our guiding principles, but little changes are sometimes okay.

The Congregations

St. John's Episcopal Church is a historic [Episcopal church](#) located at [Cape Vincent](#) in [Jefferson County, New York](#). It was built in 1841 and consists of a one-story main block and a lower side wing in the [Federal](#) style. A three-story entry tower projects from the central bay of the front facade. The tower features an eight sided [spire](#). Also on the property is the parish cemetery with the earliest gravestones dating to 1852.^[2]

It was listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/) in 1985.^[1] For more information on the listing see this link: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/75313140>

The original church was destroyed by fire during the Labor Day Weekend of 1999. The present church that was built in it's place was dedicated in 2001.

The only remaining sacred piece of the church that was not destroyed in the fire was the Paschel Candle used in previous services.



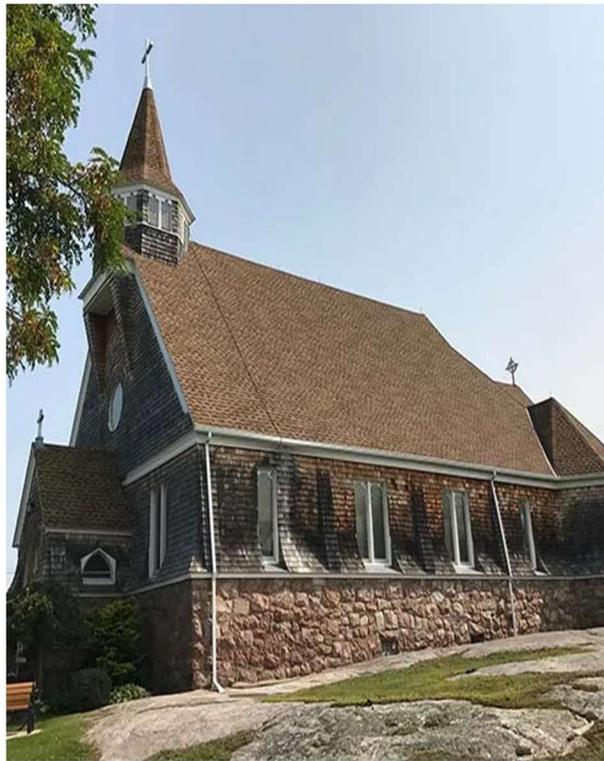
FIGURE 13 ST. JOHN'S PRE FIRE OF 1999

FIGURE 14 ST. JOHN'S POST FIRE OF 1999

Some of St. John's Windows



Church of St. Lawrence, a seasonal chapel open June through September, is located at 7 Fuller Street in Alexandria Bay, NY. A shingle-style building on a raised stone foundation and built in 1889, it was designed by architect William Wentworth and listed on the US National Register of Historic Places in 1997



Christ Episcopal Church in the village of Clayton, New York, was founded in 1868.

It is located one block from the banks of the majestic St. Lawrence River. The indigenous peoples here refer to our Thousand Islands region as "The Garden Of The Great Spirit." For generations families have flocked to this historic area for rest and spiritual rejuvenation. Today our church still enjoys the support of local families and summer residents alike. Our open, accepting, welcoming theology has served as the foundation for us as we continue to move through the 21st century.



Christ Church under a double rainbow



Christmas Eve Pageant



The Altar on Christmas Eve



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