



Office for
Transition
Ministry

Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio (last updated Jun 13, 2023)

St. Stephen and the Incarnation, Washington

1525 Newton St NW, Washington, DC 20010, United States

Contact:

Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge

search2023@saintstephensdc.org

Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA)	Number of Weekend Worship Services	Number of Weekday Worship Services	Number of Other per Month Worship Services
80	2	1	
Current Annual Compensation	Cash Stipend	Housing / Rectory Detail	Utilities
SECA reimbursement	Compensation Available for New Position	Housing Available for	Pension Plan We're in compliance with CPF requirements.
Healthcare Options	Dental	Housing Equity Allowance in budget	Annual Equity Amount
Vacation Weeks One month, including 5 Sundays (standard)	Vacation Weeks Details	Continuing Education Weeks 2 (standard)	Continuing Education Weeks Details
Continuing Education Funding in budget up to/including \$500/year	Sabbatical Provision No	Travel/Auto Account No	Other Professional Account No

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

Out of respect for parishioner safety, St. Stephen's closed its doors in March 2020 and did not open for in-person worship until the fall of 2021. Despite the physical absence, we found ways to be a supportive faith community. People gathered on Zoom for compline each evening. That first Easter, bikes and cars circled the city delivering palms and ashes to parishioner households. Youth ministry took place in public parks and the church gathered for picnics and other safe ways to stay connected. Critically, every social service offered by the church, especially its food pantry and hot meals program, continued without pause. After reopening, St. Stephen's went from 30-40 attendees as people grew more comfortable and now 70-80 faces. Volunteers returned pre-pandemic traditions like choir, coffee hour, and favorite liturgical moments and continue pandemic discoveries like online prayer and picnics. This was evident by the 2023 Easter Vigil, a rich bilingual celebration with lights projected on the ceiling, percussion, and a sense of wonder. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we found ways to preserve much of what makes St. Stephen's what it is and remain a united community.

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

The last three years have been a challenge. The February 2020 announcement of a change in the leadership structure from and the subsequent departure of our former senior priest would be difficult during ordinary times, but even more so during the pandemic. Members felt hurt, left out of decisions, and our normal methods for resolving conflict were impossible. Last spring, a group of parishioners formed a Healing Task Force to guide us through a process of reconciliation. We spent much of the past year listening to each other and reflecting on ways we intentionally or unintentionally hurt one another as well as seeking guidance, grace, and love from each other and God. We are now in a period of forgiveness and resurrection as we focus on transparency, building consensus, rooting out white dominant culture, and ensuring this does not happen again. We are also bringing back old traditions such as book groups, monthly morning forum, and specific events like the Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner. We continue bringing more people into the church as both services have had large drop in numbers, especially Misa. We are dedicated to welcoming people back to our church or for the first time.

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

Cultural Fluency, cheerful evangelism, collaborative problem-solver, liturgical creativity

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

Service in English 10:30 a.m. Sunday - Rite Two Eucharist with music from diverse liturgical and cultural traditions, currently led by the volunteer parish choir, though a music director should be hired later this year. It is a mix of formal and informal worship, a lively exchange of the peace, congregants participate in the prayers of the people, and children help collect the offering and join in the offertory procession. The Eucharist is celebrated with the congregation circling the altar. Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) is 55-65. Service in Spanish 5:30 p.m. Misa Alegria Sunday service. A Rite Two Eucharist with an ASA of 15-20, it is SSI's liveliest service—joyful and spontaneous. Music is the core of Misa's celebration, full of spirit with service music from the Flor y Canto hymnal and from Misa's representative countries. Misa also celebrates various holidays and special services from the various cultures and countries of the parishioners. Online Services Since the pandemic began, members in the congregation have met on Zoom for Wednesday evening meditation in English, Thursday Morning Prayer in English and daily lay-led Compline in English.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

SSI has a spirited tradition of lay leadership, both in its corporate worship and other ministries. Congregants are part of the choir and music ministry; lead prayers of the people; provide Communion bread, coffee hour snacks, meals after Misa; serve as greeters, readers, members of the altar guild, eucharistic ministers; and occasionally preach. Children ages 3 and up are invited to Godly Play, which overlaps with the 10:30 a.m. service. Meanwhile, there is childcare provided for newborns to 3-year olds during worship. Parishioner-generated small groups incorporate people into the life of the church, including a biannual Welcome Class, intergenerational book groups, and centering prayer groups. Congregants also volunteer to share their knowledge on topics ranging from mental health to the Shakers during lay-led Sunday morning forums, held before the 10:30 a.m. service. Loaves and Fishes, the church's prepared-meal ministry, relies on volunteer from the church and the community to prepare and serve meals, bring communion to anyone desiring the sacraments, and to help with the program's fundraising, publishing newsletters, scheduling, and serving on the management board.

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

The Pastoral Care Team, composed of parishioners and clergy, meets as needed for training and to support one another as we meet the pastoral needs of parishioners. Members of the team are available for hospital visits, taking communion to people who are home-bound, prayers, and providing general support. In 2022, our Deacon retired and this work is now led by the Children's Christian Education Coordinator. Social gatherings include Sunday coffee hours, picnics, and potlucks, as well as many of the groups described in #3, often meet in parishioner homes over a shared meal. Bilingual events encourage English- and Spanish-speaking members to come together. Examples include creative workshops to prepare for the Day of the Dead and the Great Vigil of Easter, liturgical art projects, a weekly bilingual stitching and prayer group, and bilingual liturgy retreats. Permanent and ad-hoc committees (e.g. Finance, Buildings and Grounds, Stewardship, Personnel, Liturgy Team, and Pastoral Care) enable members to contribute to parish life. There are English, Spanish, and bilingual Whatsapp groups and email list-servs that enable people to connect and alert one another to needs in the parish.

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

Our prayer list (included in the weekly update and spoken at weekly services) contains prayers for people of the SSI community, and for those far and near, who have touched their lives. As stated in question 1, we welcome neighbors to celebrate life events such as quinceañeras, funerals, and marriages at the church for people without a church home. Three years ago, we included the names of those lost to gun violence in the Ofrenda for the Day of the Dead. A person passing through the church on the way to a food program in the building was moved to tears when she noticed her nephew's name on the Ofrenda because complete strangers were remembering and praying for him. Hundreds of people from the community visit the church every week for the food and services provided by the non-profits working in our building. Members of the community using these services see St. Stephen's as their church home. Many often request prayers, funerals, or pastoral care from our clergy.

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

SSI's ongoing projects advocate for affordable housing through multiple organizations and the St. Stephen's Housing, a 501(c)3 that owns an affordable housing unit. Since the 1960s, we have fed people through our Loaves and Fishes program, which serves hot meals on weekends and federal holidays. L&F hosts some 250 guests on a typical day and serves more than 15,000 meals a year. The church allocates \$7,500 annually to Loaves and Fishes which has an independent management board that conducts its own fundraising and grants. Our building also serves as a resource to the community. Seven nonprofit organizations are also headquartered in our church building. SSI provides space and volunteers to the Food Justice DMV which delivers groceries immigrant families in the DC area. Since May 2020, they have distributed enough food for 77,000 people. We provide office/meeting space/performing arts space at below-market rental rate to organizations meeting the needs of our city; recently hosting a Punk Rock Flea market, DC Square Dance Collective, and events supporting decriminalizing street vending. Community members also rent our space for quinceañeras, baby showers, or other celebrations.

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

The pandemic resulted in infection, job loss, food and housing insecurity among some parishioners. Several individuals or immediate family members were hospitalized for extended periods. A parishioner was diagnosed with COVID while hospitalized for the birth of premature twins and remained hospitalized for weeks. We recruited volunteers to provide baby supplies and dinners for the family for several months until she recovered. The Vestry approved a COVID Emergency Assistance Fund that along with individual grants to families in need from the Diocese and food cards from Loaves and Fishes enabled the church to respond to families most impacted by COVID. To protect individual's confidentiality, this support was managed by the Priest and Deacon at that time. During the pandemic, parishioners began a daily zoom Compline each evening. This service had a regular attendance of 5-15 people and was followed by more casual discussion. Online Compline is still ongoing and while the numbers have dropped as COVID protocols eased, it remains an important part of the lives of the participants. For information on Compline or the COVID Emergency Assistance Fund, contact wardens@saintstephensdc.org.

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

Traditionally, a stewardship team organizes the annual stewardship campaign in the fall, coordinating with the clergy to bring the stewardship theme into the services and collecting pledges from members. Periodically the stewardship committee also solicits "Time and Talent" surveys from parishioners to emphasize the importance of contributing to the life of the community in addition to providing financial support. This year, the stewardship team recognized that the act of reconnecting with parishioners was as important, if not more important than soliciting pledges. In addition to designing and distributing a bilingual pledge packet by mail, the team members endeavored to make contact with each member of the congregation with the goal of first asking people how they were doing, how connected they felt to the parish in this time of change and pandemic, and how the church could best serve them at this time. Parishioner reaction to the stewardship contact was positive and people welcomed the conversations. In addition, the absolute number of pledging households was the same as in 2020, in spite of the challenges of the previous year.

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

In the 1990s, SSI faced dwindling attendance due in part to the drug epidemic in the neighborhood and financial collapse resulting in a 5-year period without paid clergy. There was significant conflict and we worked to develop norms for listening and communicating. We went on to develop proactive and inclusive ways to resolve disagreements with a commitment to using discernment principles. The congregation was able to build back. The 2020 vestry decision to change the leadership model while not renewing the Senior Priest's contract was made without transparency or wider discernment. A Healing Task Force convened affinity group with members of the 10:30 and Misa services, and former Church leadership. Over several meetings, these groups reflected on our experiences, blind spots, how we contributed to others' pain, and what we needed to move forward. We then came together as a full church and each affinity group shared what it wanted others to know. We made an ofrenda with images of what we had lost and wrote down what we needed to let go of and placed them in a fire. The Healing Committee is currently writing up the themes and important lessons as a set of community principles.

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?

SSI has been in a state of change for a century. Initially in a white, working-class neighborhood, desegregation in the 50's led to white flight. Riots after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. devastated 14th St. Then a rise of Central American immigration in the 80s and 90s. The Metro came in 1999; "revitalization" and gentrification followed. Yet Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant remain one of the most diverse areas in DC. SSI has responded to these demographic shifts with resilience and openness to new possibilities. SSI has been at the forefront of major changes in the church: women's rights to vote in parish elections, church desegregation, liturgical innovations, women's ordination, calls for reparations, and same-sex unions. Over time, difficulty with change has existed when clergy or lay leaders do not involve the community in the process of change. Change has gone well when clergy and lay leaders involve parishioners in meaningful conversation on the challenges ahead and in discernment about future directions. We have learned that dialogue and deep listening take practice and willingness to confront our own biases and require ongoing reflection and commitment.

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Prior Incumbents

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Rondesia Jarrett-Schell	Interim	2021-07	2023-07

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Sam Dessordi Leite	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	2016-05	2020-12

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Frank Dunn	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	2004-05	2016-05

Church School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School	Number of Students for Children School
N/A	6	35

Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School	Number of Students for Adults School
5	32		

Day School	Number of Students for Day School	Number of Teachers for Day School	Number of Total Staff for Day School



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Worshipping Community Web site:

Media Links:

Online References:

Languages Significantly Represented:

Provide Worship or Classes in:

References

Bishop:

Diocesan Transition Minister

Current Warden/Board Chair

Previous Warden/Board Chair

Search Chair

Parish/Institution

Local Community Leader